SUBVERTISING

THE PIRACY OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

HOGRE

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www.hogre.it

SUBVERTISING

THE PIRACY OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

AGENTS

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WATT TYLER	Technical supervisor
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MANNY	Cheerleader
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ALIENLOG	Webmaster
MATT BONNER	Book design and layout

SEAL BREAKER

Andrea Natella

translated by Sarah Gainsforth

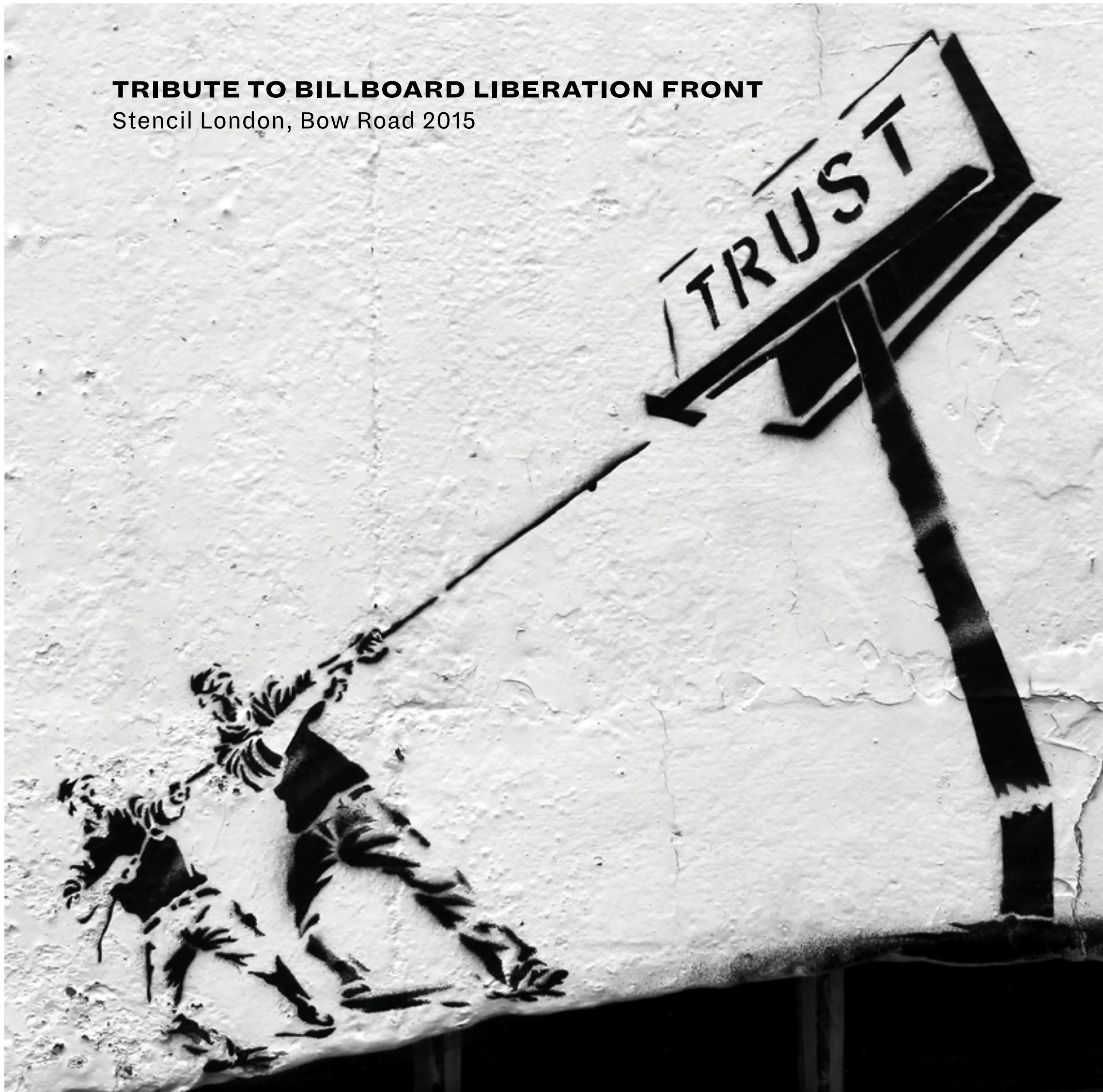
Advertising does not tell the truth about the products it sells, but it can’t completely lie, either. Thanks to a set of fairly rigid rules, contemporary advertising is formally bound within the principles of law. The laws it is obliged to follow set advertising apart from the post-truth that is spreading throughout the internet, politics and journalism. Post-truth “relates to or denotes circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”, and while modern advertising has always engaged with the public through “emotions and personal belief”, it is legally bound to be truthful about a product's “objective facts”. But the product is itself no longer an objective fact since, according to Marx, it contains a duality: use value and exchange value (its utility and its price, or what it's worth and what it costs). The role of advertising is to guarantee this duplicity by making a spectacle of the use value: the usefulness of the product advertised can’t be found in what it allows us to do practically, but in what it enables us to express. Advertising cannot really lie because of this original deceit: the product has always been post-truth.

When in 1867 Karl Marx wrote the well-known opening of Capital – “the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities” – he couldn't have imagined, as Guy Debord remarked a century later, that contemporary commodities are not even presented as such: "what we see is an immense accumulation of spectacles”.

In fact, the spectacle of goods is so deeply integrated that we don’t even see the accumulation. We don’t see the banners, we don’t see the TV ads, we don’t see the poster ads along the roads. Yet everywhere are brands, their message penetrating somewhere beyond the threshold of our awareness. The billboard industry measures the value of these spaces in tenths of a second. A billboard in a pedestrian area costs more than one on a highway because it can be looked at for a few moments longer. But billboards are not a distraction: they don’t even have an impact on the number of road accidents. We don’t really notice them and we're not supposed to, not too much. Strangely enough, too much attention paid becomes counterproductive, the observer would have the time to analyse the message. In order to conceal the duplicity of the exchange value, advertising must become part of the urban landscape. It is everywhere, and it presents itself differently each time; it dazzles us in order to become invisible.

The billboard *is* the advertising. Not only because historically it is the first advertising medium of modern times. The name itself reminds us that a billboard is the first advertising space to be put on sale according to industrial logic. A billboard is also the first medium from a methodological perspective: in advertising agencies, as well as on advertising courses, the poster is the first element around which a campaign is built. To hack a billboard is therefore to hack advertising itself. Unlike magazine, radio, TV or internet ads, a billboard is physically the same unique artefact for thousands of observers. The city is what carries it, but the observers of the message are the city. Thus the medium is alive and can react, and in one way or the other it always has. Wherever there has been a billboard there has also always been someone taking it down, defacing it, writing on it or drawing over it. But no matter how often these acts might have had a political meaning, they still remained one person’s occasional act.

These diverse practices were thematised at the end of the 1970s. Members of the Billboard Liberation Front in California led the way and performed some



TRIBUTE TO BILLBOARD LIBERATION FRONT
Stencil London, Bow Road 2015

of the first actions known as subvertising. What they termed “improvements” on billboards have a semantic approach. They intervene in the semantic content of the message with the situationist method of detournement (a rerouting or hijacking). They change a few words, an image, the claim. “I’m lovin' it” becomes “I’m sick of it”. In the same period in Australia, the B.U.G.A.U.P. (Billboard Utilizing Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions) group was born, and specialised in actions targeting alcohol and tobacco ads. Their actions dialogue with the explicit contents of the ads to modify meaning. Both groups restated the imperative aspect of advertising in order to convey a different message to the one intended.

The Antipub movement in France employs a different approach. Here the actions are all related to the struggle against the invasion of advertising in public spaces. The Antipub group questions the presence of messages with private aims in spaces that belong to everyone. Their actions consist of organised vandalism. Billboards are often simply covered with splashes of paint or brutalised with simple spray-painted phrases: “Adv=Violence” or “Nothing, nothing, nothing”. The message advertised has no importance: Antipub’s action is purely a dialectical negation of advertising with the purpose of reminding us that all advertising is shit.

The works collected in this book employ yet another strategy. Here the dialogue with advertising is severed. The billboard is just another kind of canvas. When the glass is opened to insert a new artwork, what is left of the advert is only the frame and the meaning that the frame assumes. And while we are busy questioning the meaning of each replacement work we can’t help but note that the message displayed by the original advert is ultimately and always the same one revealed in the John Carprenter movie They Live: “Obey!”

Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy; Volume I (1867)
Guy Debord, The society of the spectacle (1967)
Guy Debord, Comments on the Society of the Spectacle (1988)
Umberto Eco, Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare (1967)
billboardliberation.com
bugaup.org

BILLBOARDS

SUBVERTISING
holid
CLEARCHANNEL

The constant imposition of advertising in front of our eyes is an oppressive, dictatorial and violent act.

Subvertising reacts to this visual pollution with an equally violent and direct aesthetic, without asking for permission or waiting for consensus.

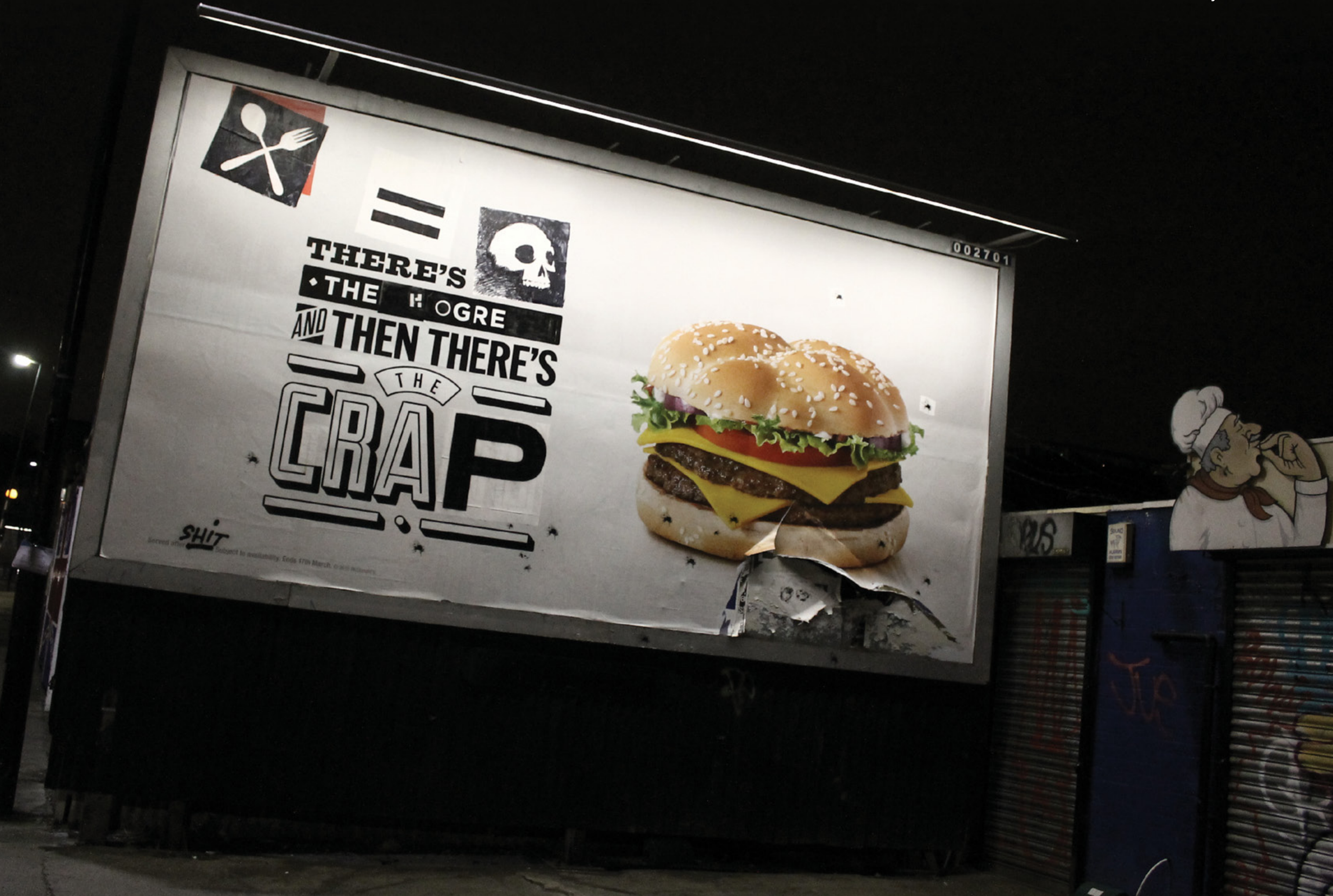
Removing, replacing and defacing advertising is an act of civil disobedience that is both legally and morally defensible.

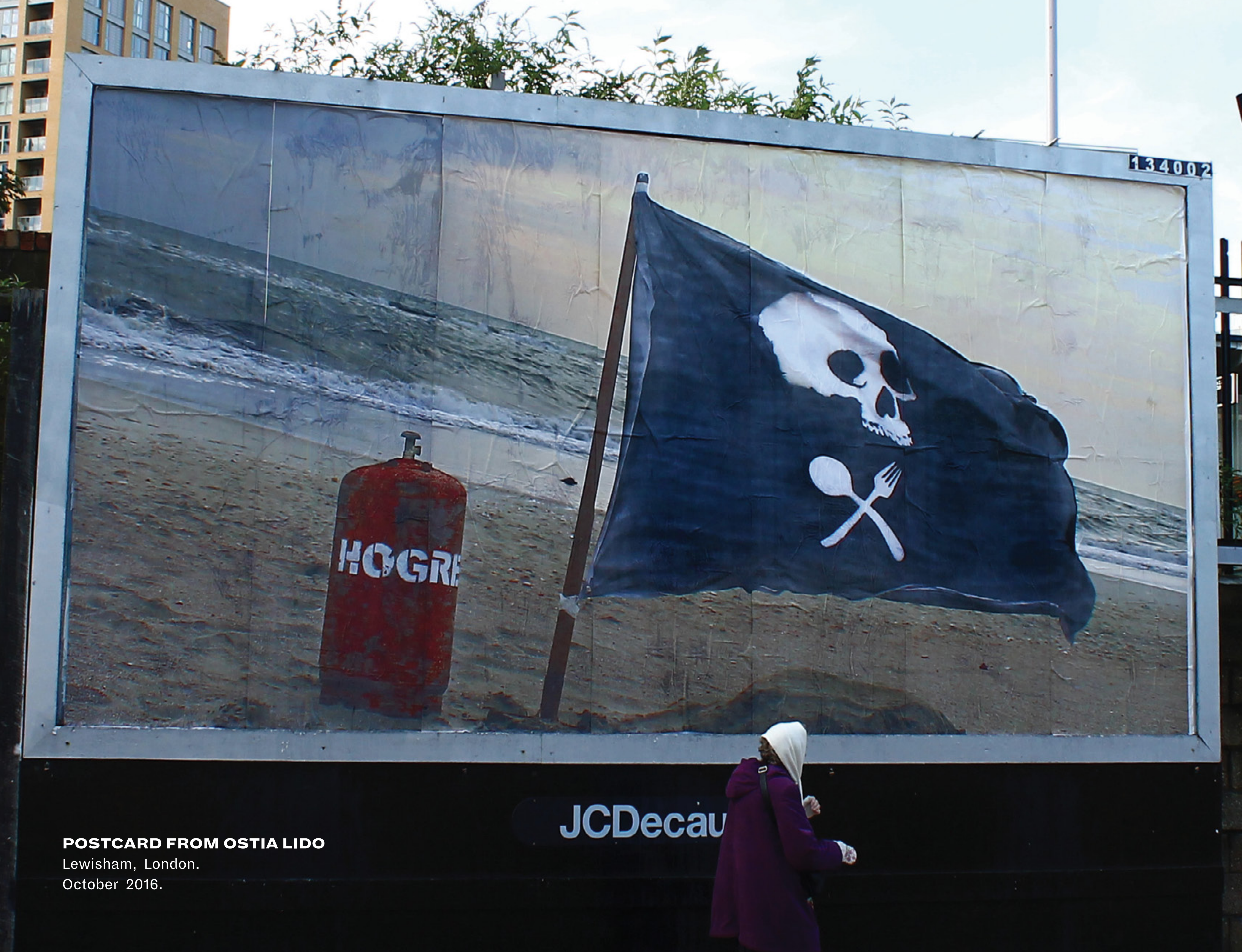
“As a private person, I have a passion for landscape, and I have never seen one improved by a billboard.”

David Ogilvy (1911-1999)
Confessions of an Advertising Man

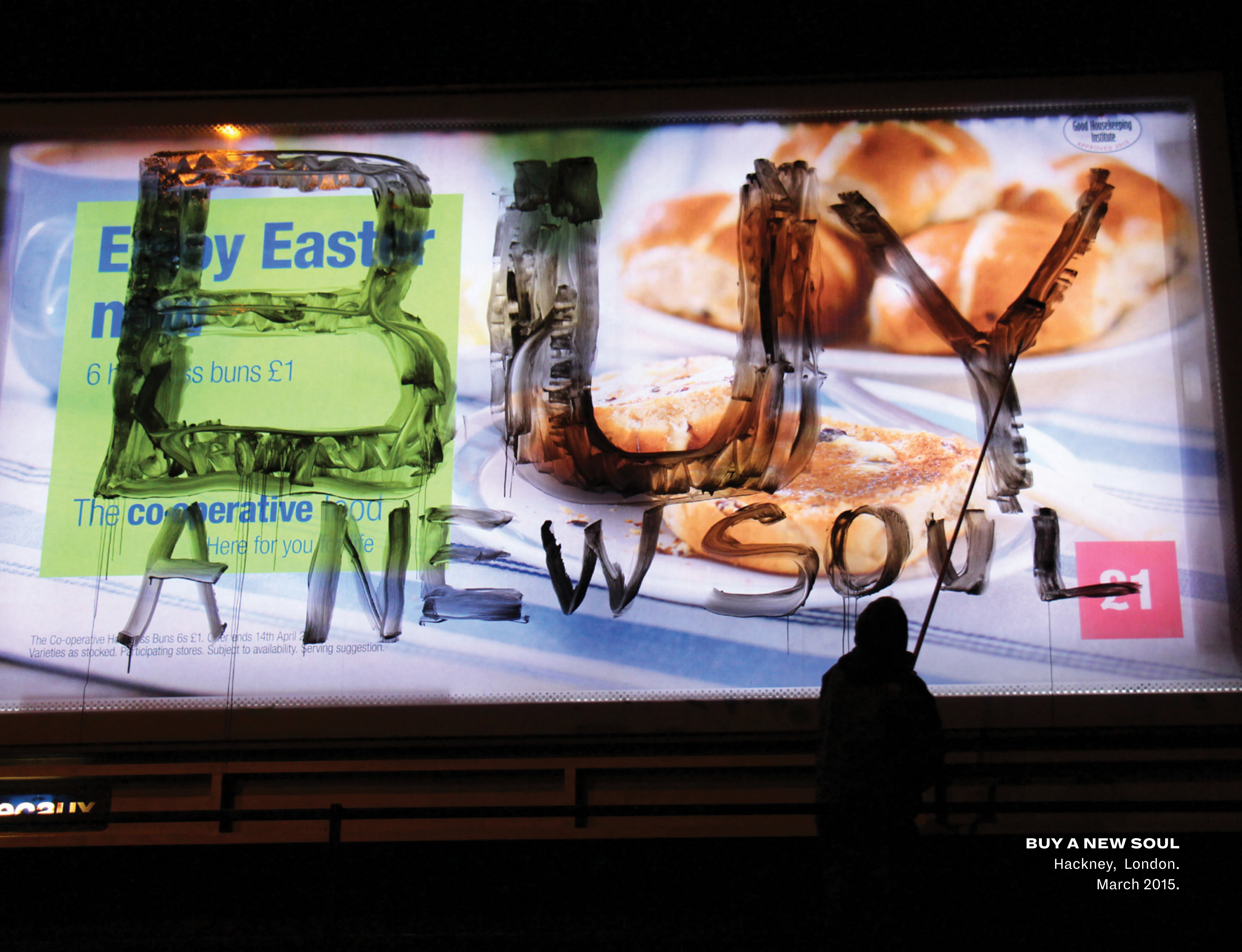
SUBVERTiSiNG
best
one
holid
cut
to
Go to Disne e.com for your FR
£9.99/month after free trial ends, ess cancelled. UK only, 18+ to sign up

CRAP
Hackney Wick, London.
February 2016.


THERE'S
THE OGRE
AND THEN THERE'S
THE
CRAP
SHIT
Served after
Subject to availability. Ends 17th March.
002701

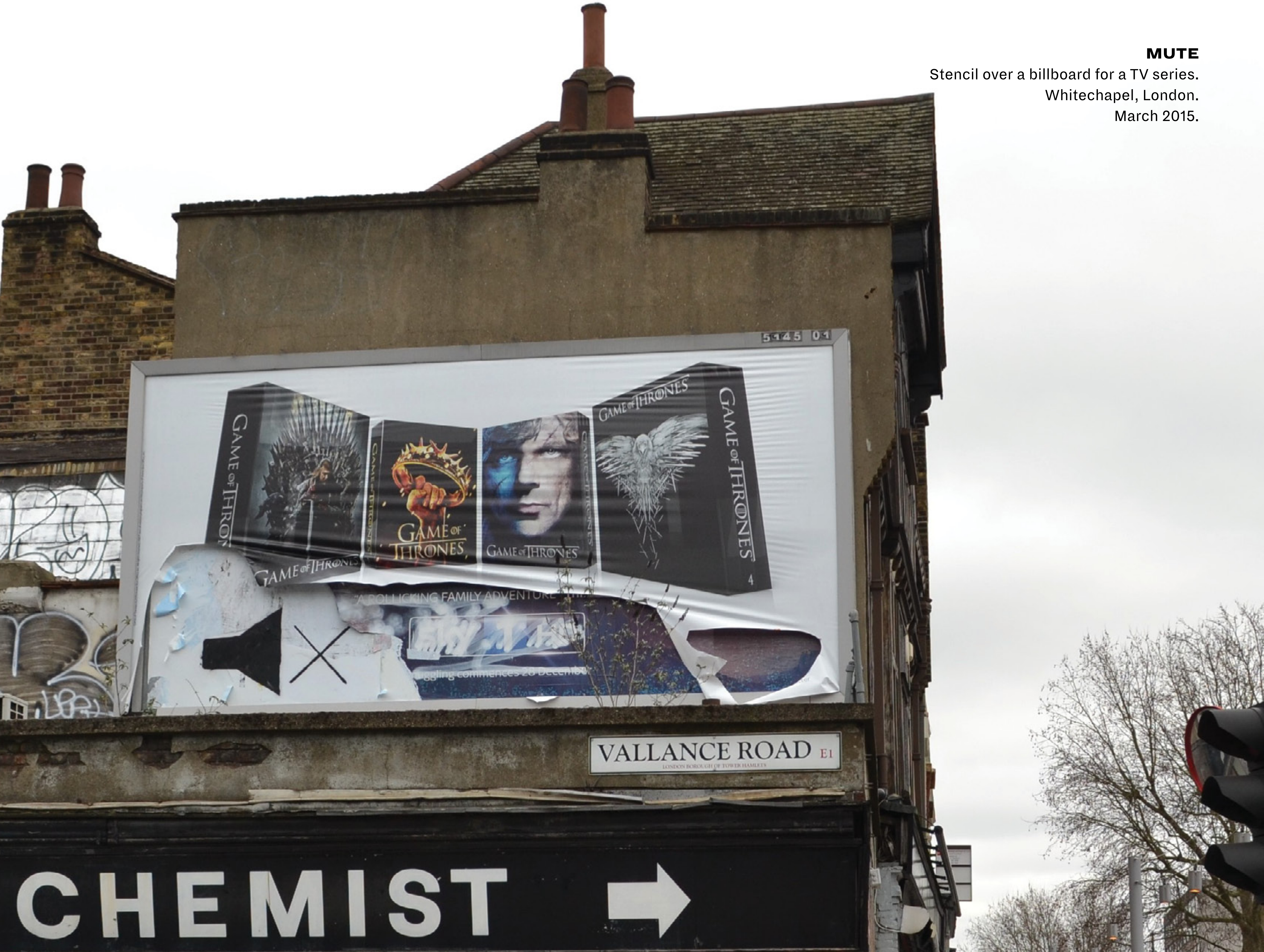

134002
HOGRE
JCDecau

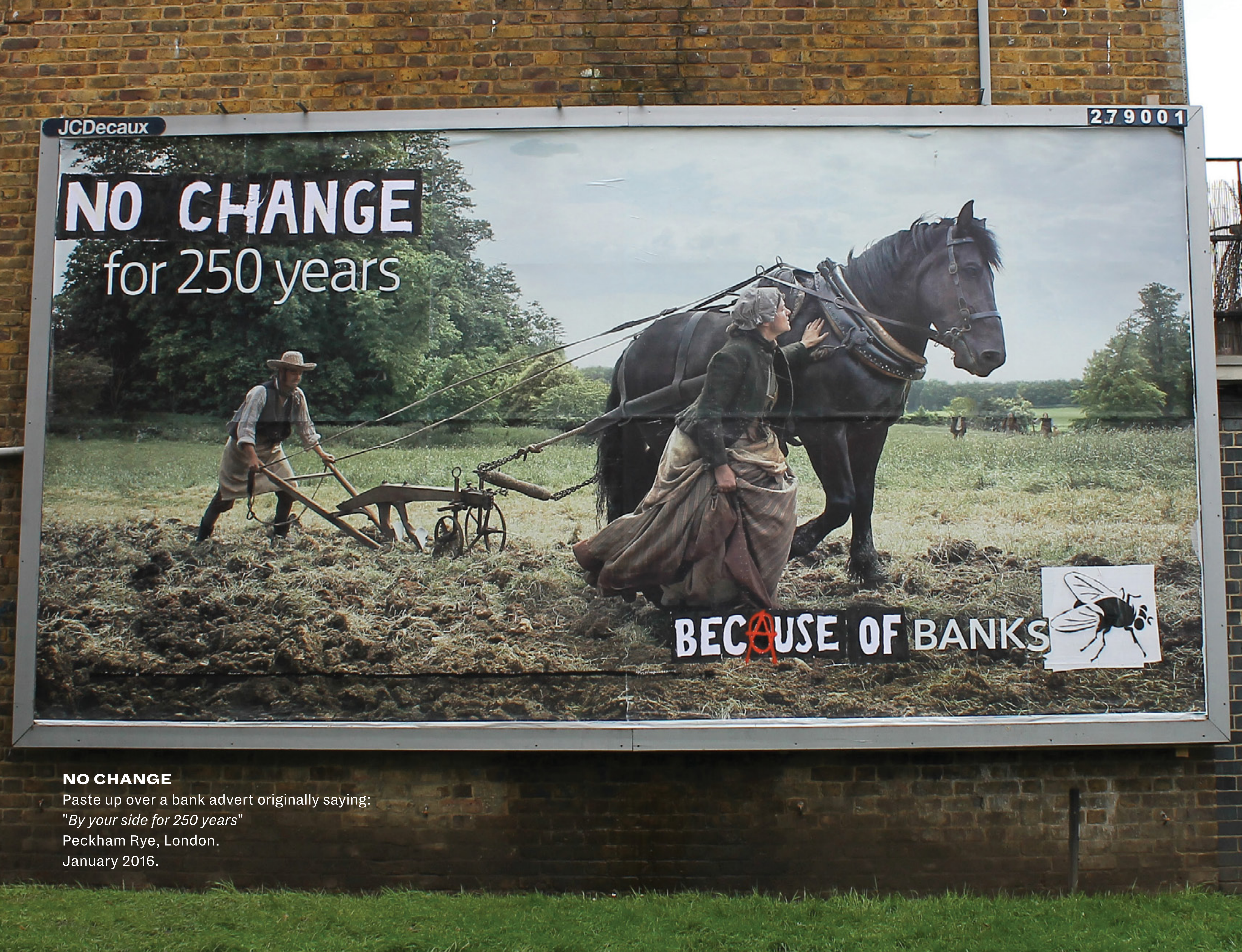
POSTCARD FROM OSTIA LIDO
Lewisham, London.
October 2016.


BUY
A NEW SOUL
Good Housekeeping Institute
E   y Easter
6 h   ss buns £1
The co-operative food
Here for you
£1
The Co-operative H   ss Buns 6s £1. O er ends 14th April 2
Varieties as stocked. Participating stores. Subject to availability. Serving suggestion.

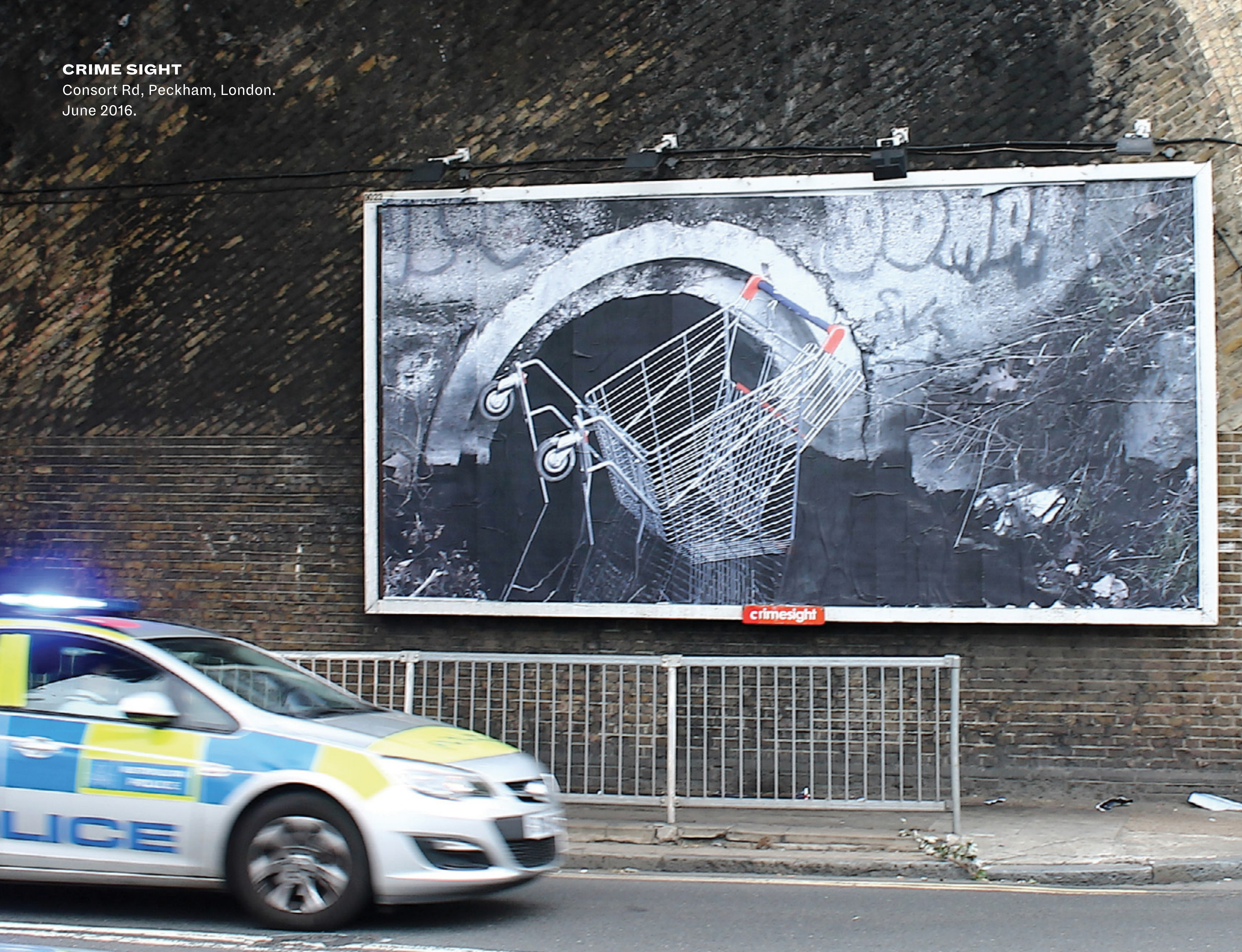
BUY A NEW SOUL
Hackney, London.
March 2015.

MUTE
Stencil over a billboard for a TV series.
Whitechapel, London.
March 2015.


5145 01
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
GAME OF THRONES
4
"A ROLLICKING FAMILY ADVENTURE
VALLANCE ROAD E1
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
CHEMIST


JCDecaux
279001
NO CHANGE
for 250 years
BECAUSE OF BANKS

NO CHANGE
Paste up over a bank advert originally saying:
"*By your side for 250 years*"
Peckham Rye, London.
January 2016.

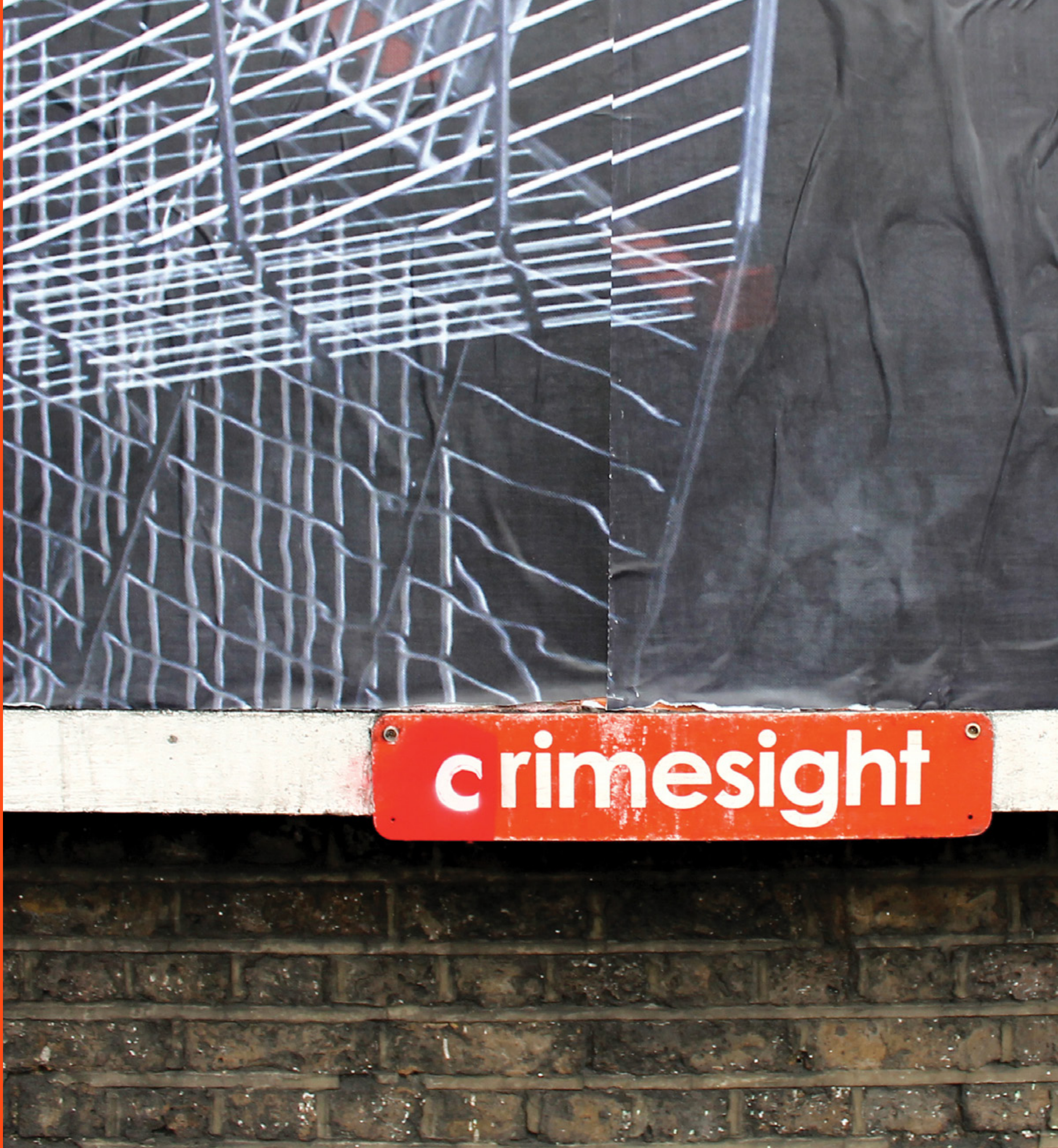

crimesight

CRIME SIGHT
Consort Rd, Peckham, London.
June 2016.

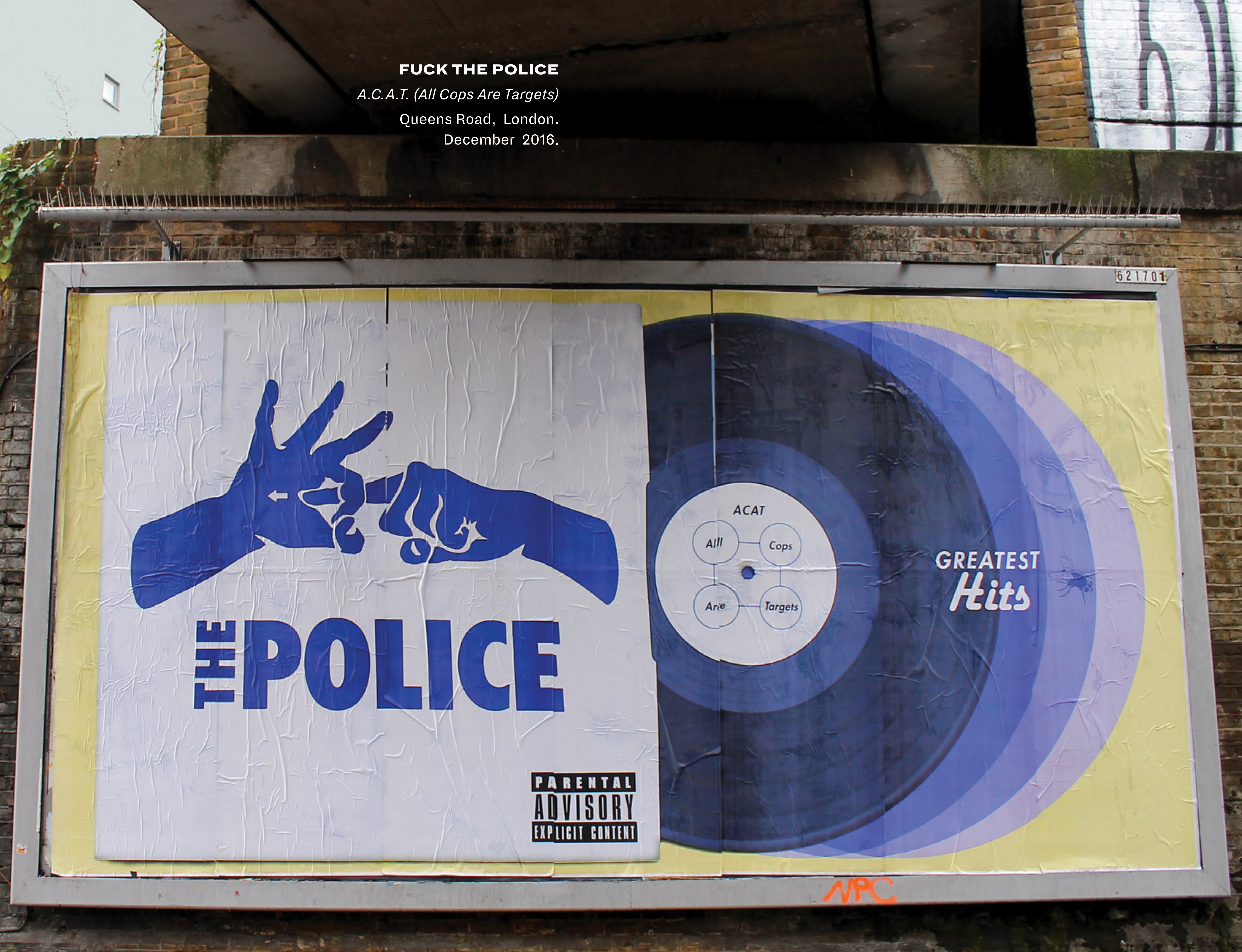
"Subvertising works in the same way as word play: by creating a displacement of an already-established disposition, it disrupts our habitual ways of thinking. A good subvert intervenes in the visual landscape to puncture the existing regime of truth. Very often subvertising takes the form of a visual pun.

So... what's the bigger crime? Vandalising a billboard or vandalising the planet? That's up to your subconscious to decide..."

Special Patrol Group



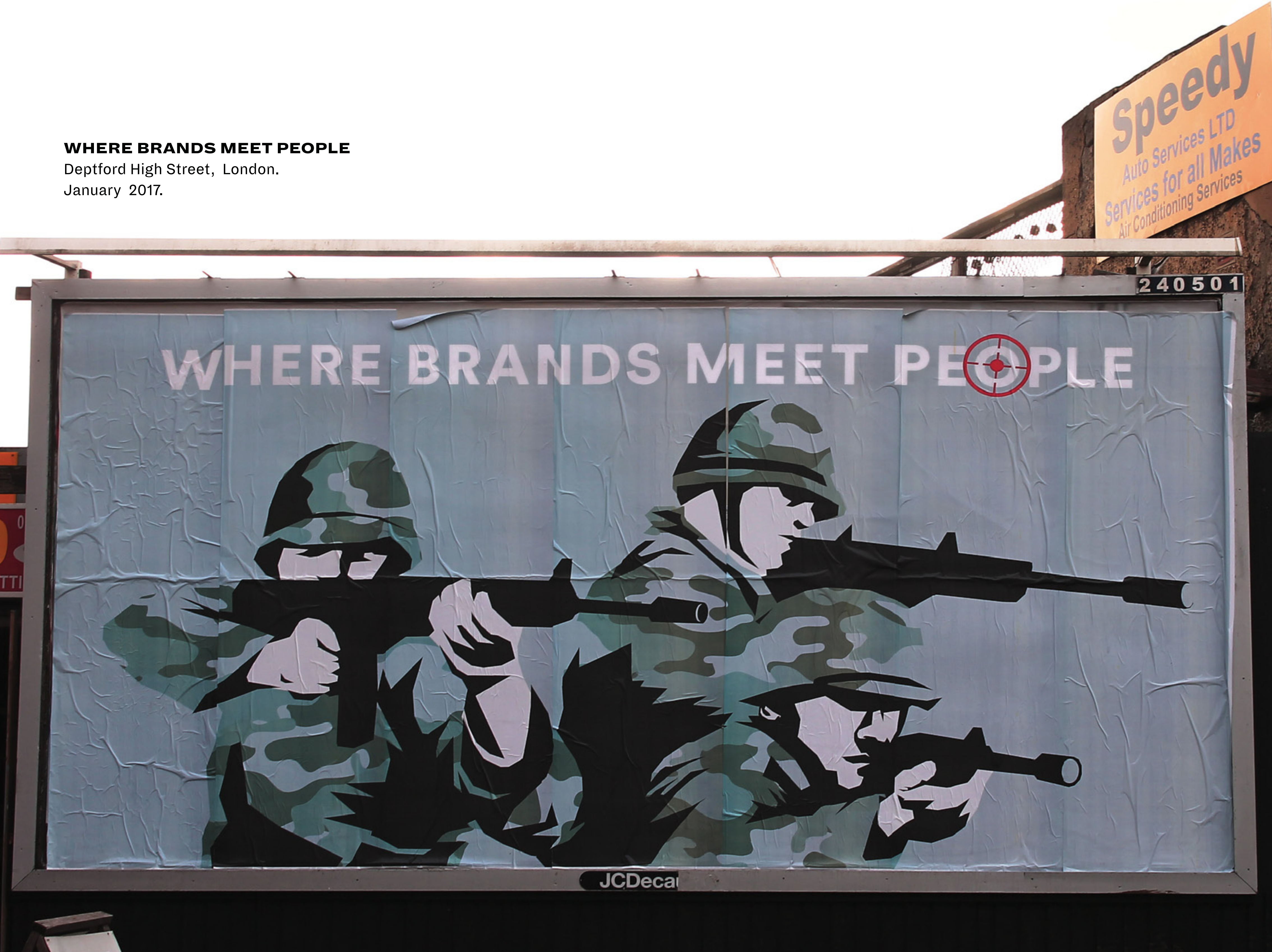
CRIME SIGHT
Consort Rd, Peckham, London.
June 2016.

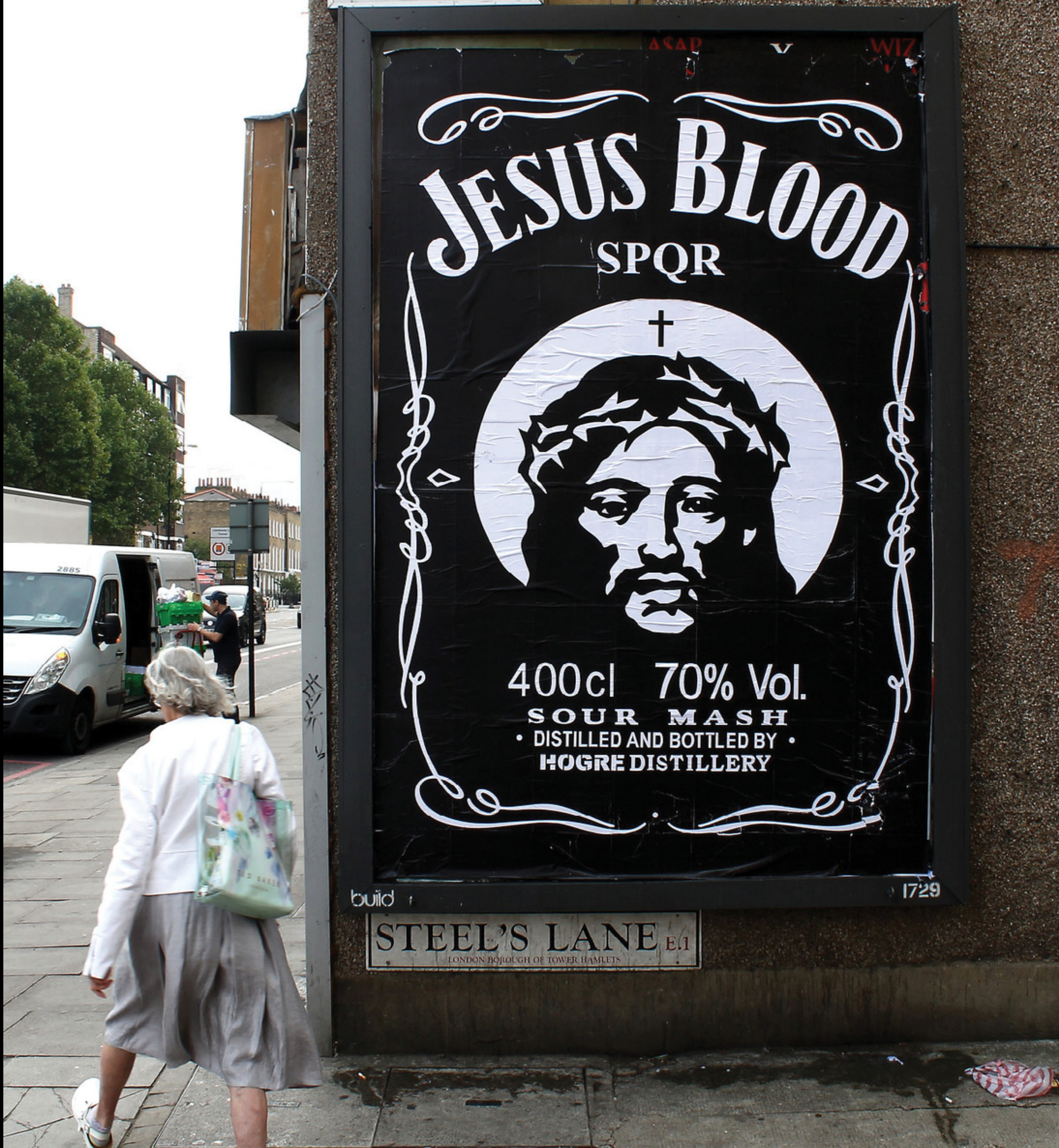


FUCK THE POLICE
A.C.A.T. (All Cops Are Targets)
Queens Road, London.
December 2016.

621701
THE POLICE
PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT
ACAT
All
Cops
Are
Targets
GREATEST
Hits
NPC

WHERE BRANDS MEET PEOPLE
Deptford High Street, London.
January 2017.

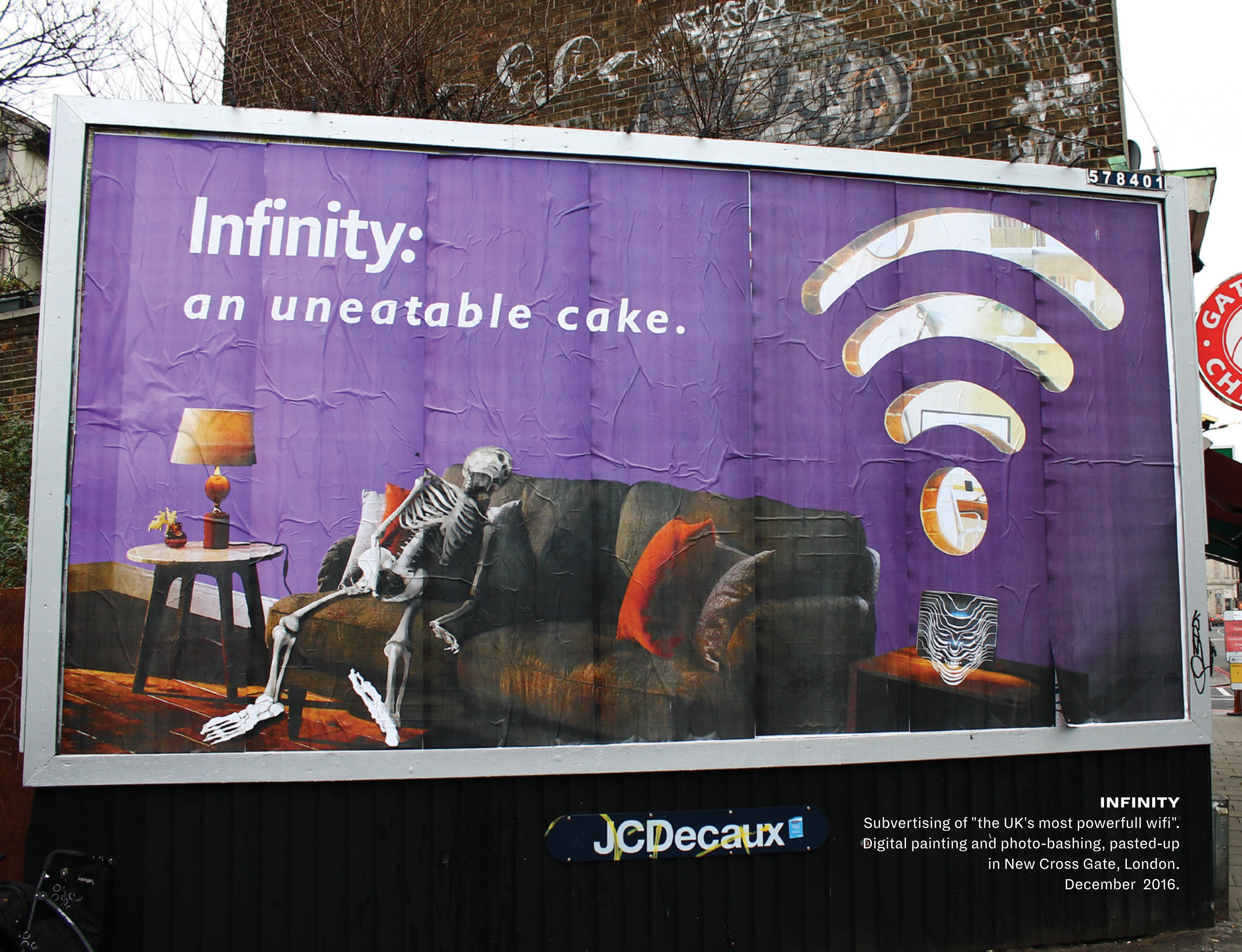

WHERE BRANDS MEET PEOPLE
Speedy
Auto Services LTD
Services for all Makes
Air Conditioning Services
240501
JCDeca


JESUS BLOOD
SPQR
400cl 70% Vol.
SOUR MASH
• DISTILLED AND BOTTLED BY •
HOGRE DISTILLERY
build
1729
STEEL'S LANE E.1
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

JESUS BLOOD

400 cl 70% Vol.
SOUR MASH

Pasted up in London close to
Shadwell DLR station.
Partially censored after one day.


578401
Infinity:
an uneatable cake.
JCDecaux

INFINITY

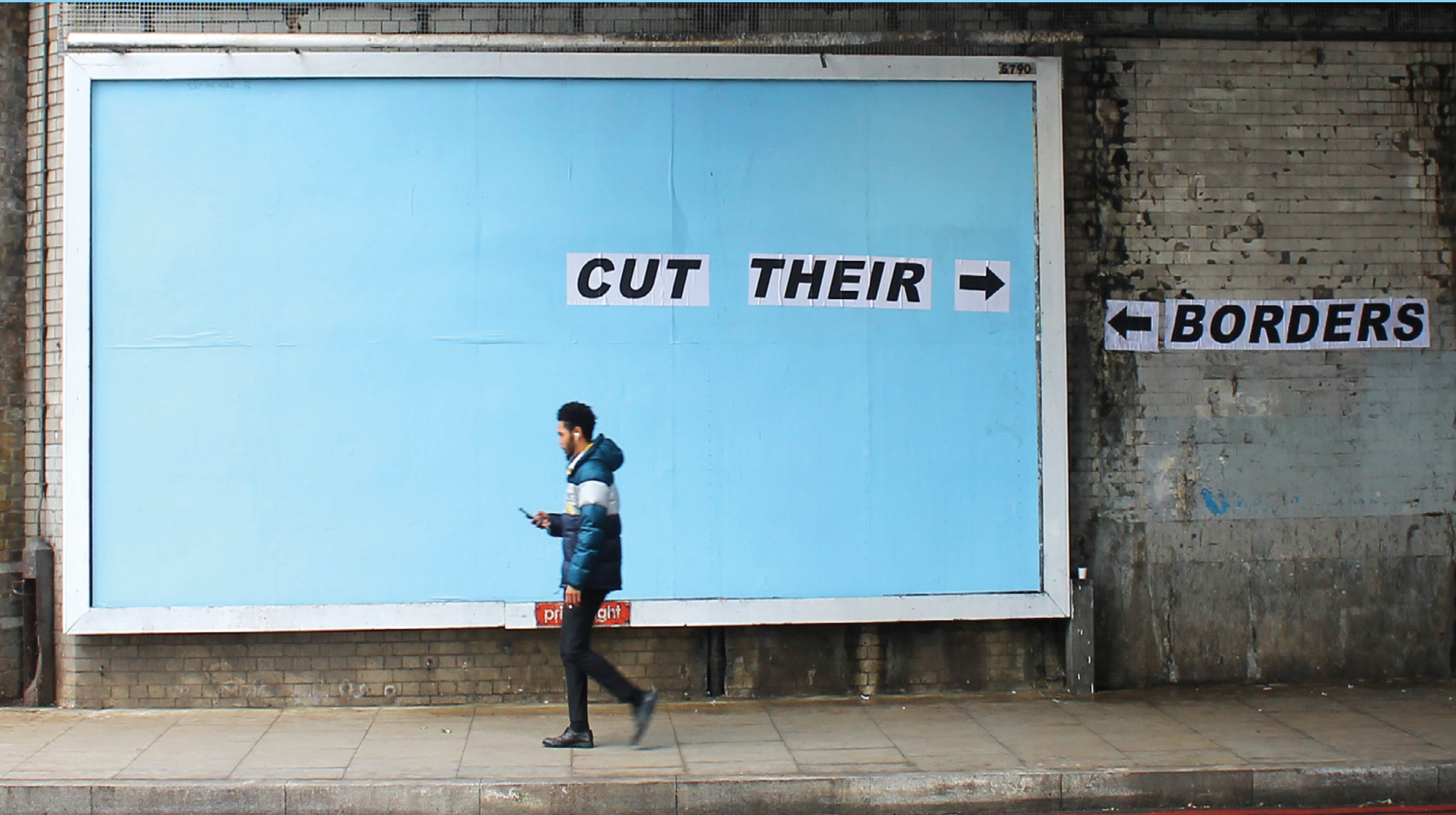
Subvertising of "the UK's most powerfull wifi".
Digital painting and photo-bashing, pasted-up
in New Cross Gate, London.
December 2016.

"The world is now divided into those with power, who believe in walls, razor wires, passports... and those who believe that rivers, mountains, lakes and seas are the Earth's only borders".

Anonymous No Border activist

CUT THEIR BORDERS

Loampit Vale, London.
November 2016.

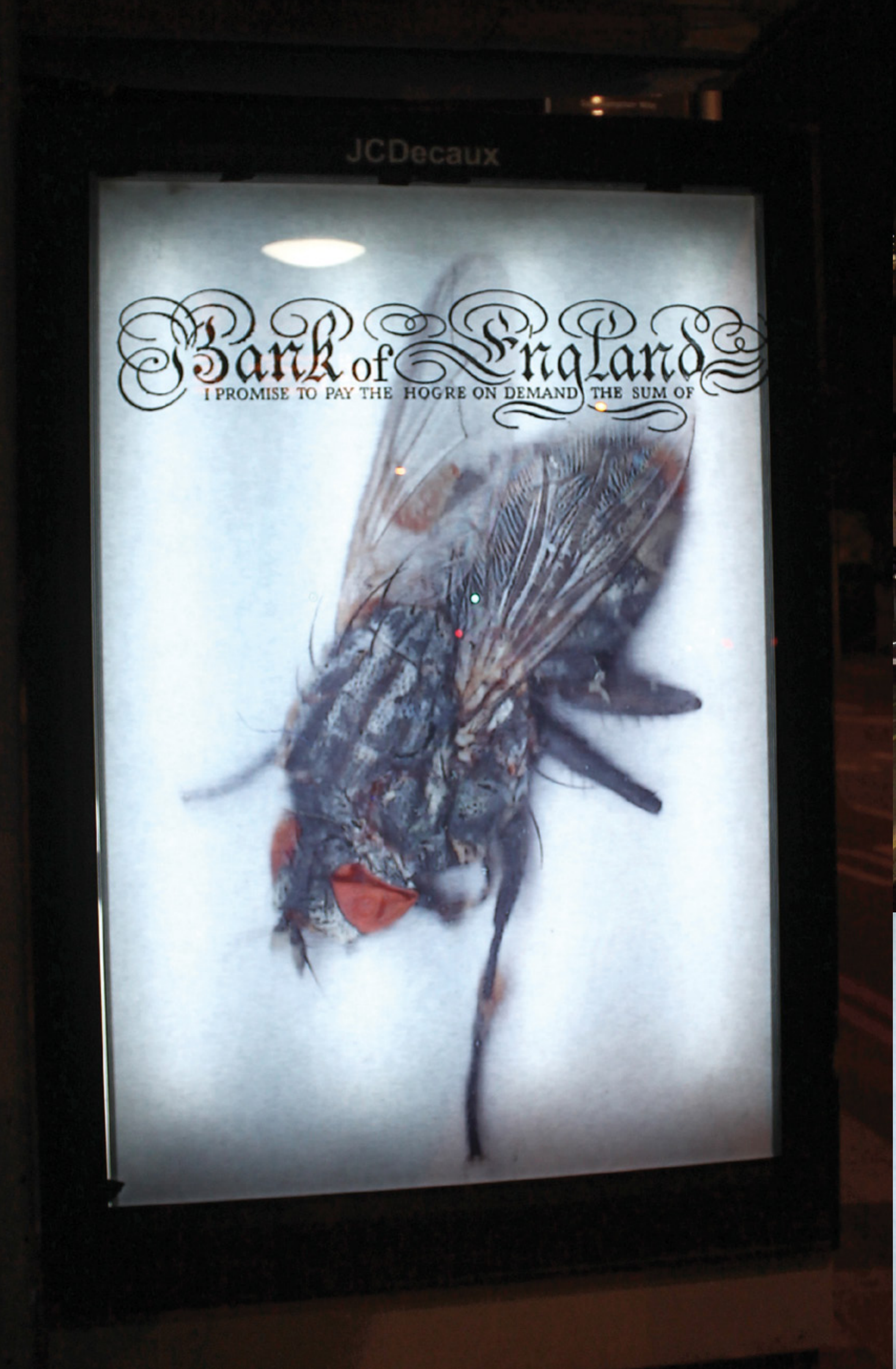

CUT THEIR →
← BORDERS
5790
pri ght

SOTTOVETRO

In Italian cuisine the term "sottovetro" refers to a method of food preservation inside glass jars, to protect it from bacteria and guarantee a longer life.

The glass that protects many ads, widespread in the cities of Western democracies, has a similar function. The consumerist propaganda is framed, back-lit, and protected by glass, which, being slightly reflective, surrounds it with an almost sacred aura...

...usually a screwdriver or an allen key is enough to break the lock - and the psychological barrier.


JCDecaux
Bank of England
I PROMISE TO PAY THE HOGRE ON DEMAND THE SUM OF

HOGRE
BUS STOP

BANK OF ENGLAND

I promise to pay the HOGRE on demand the sum of...

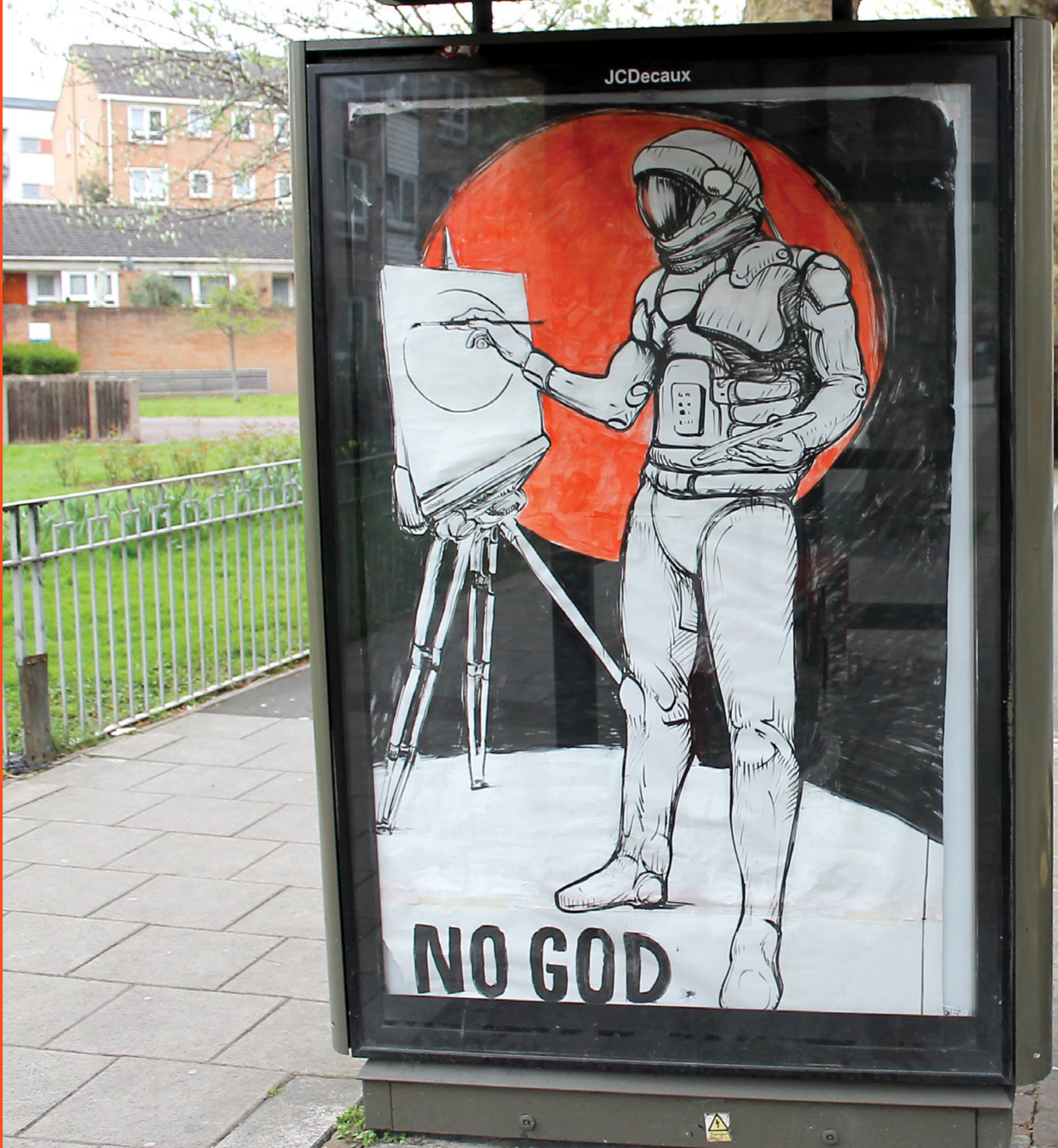
Scanned flies printed with a large format printer (scale 100:1). Posters sealed in both sides of several bus stops around London.
May 2016.

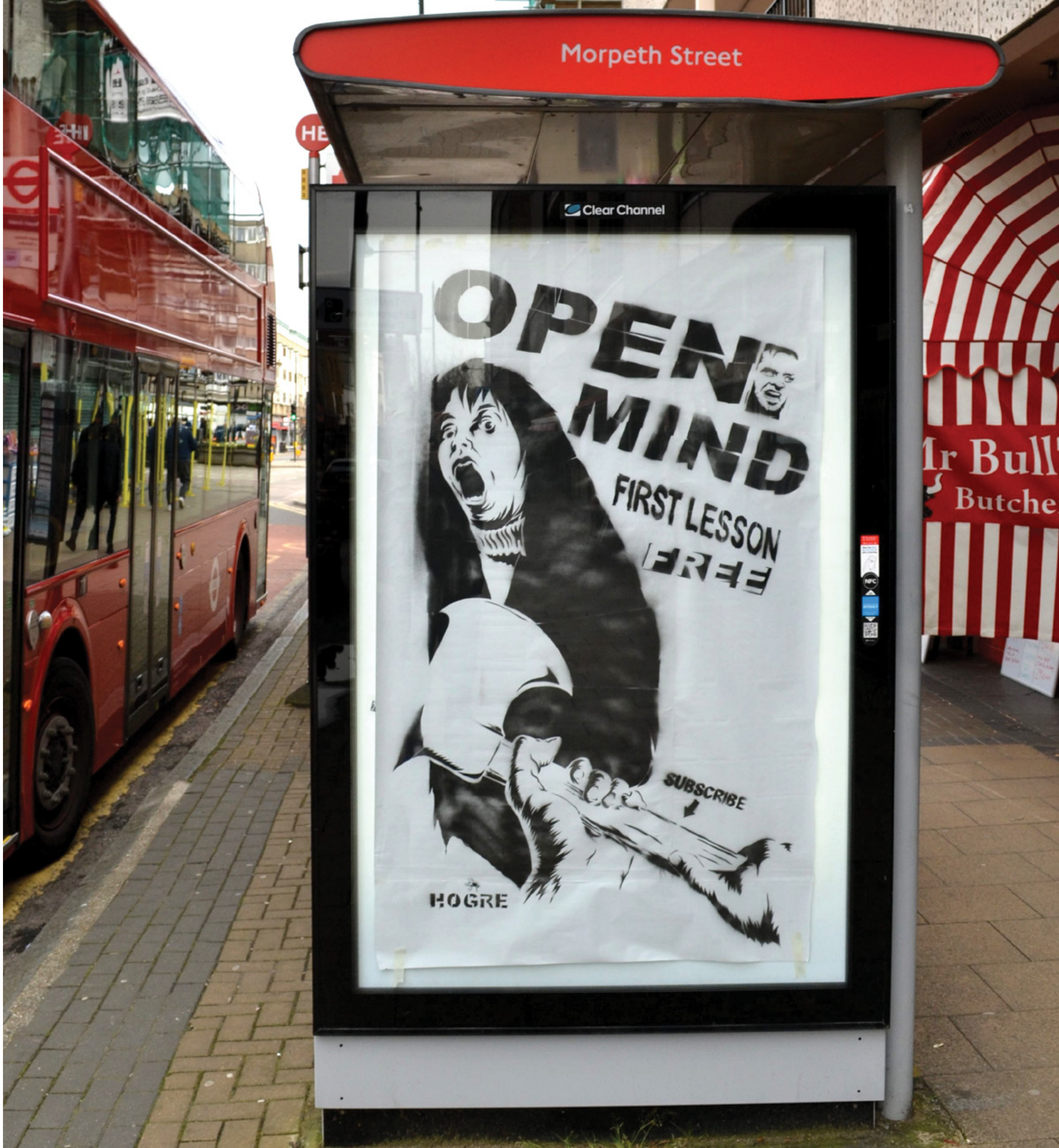
"Every star, whatever it might be, thus exists in infinite number in time and space, not only in one of its aspects, but as it is found in every second of its duration, from birth until death. All the beings spread across its surface, big or little, animate or inanimate, share in this privilege of perennity. The earth is one of these stars. Every human being is thus eternal in every second of its existence."

Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881)
No Gods, No Masters

SELF TAUGHT'S STILL LIFE

Acrylic and marker on skipped paper.
Flint Street, London. 2016.




Morpeth Street
Clear Channel
OPEN MIND
FIRST LESSON FREE
SUBSCRIBE
HOGRE
Mr Bull
Butche

OPEN MIND

First lesson free. Subscribe.

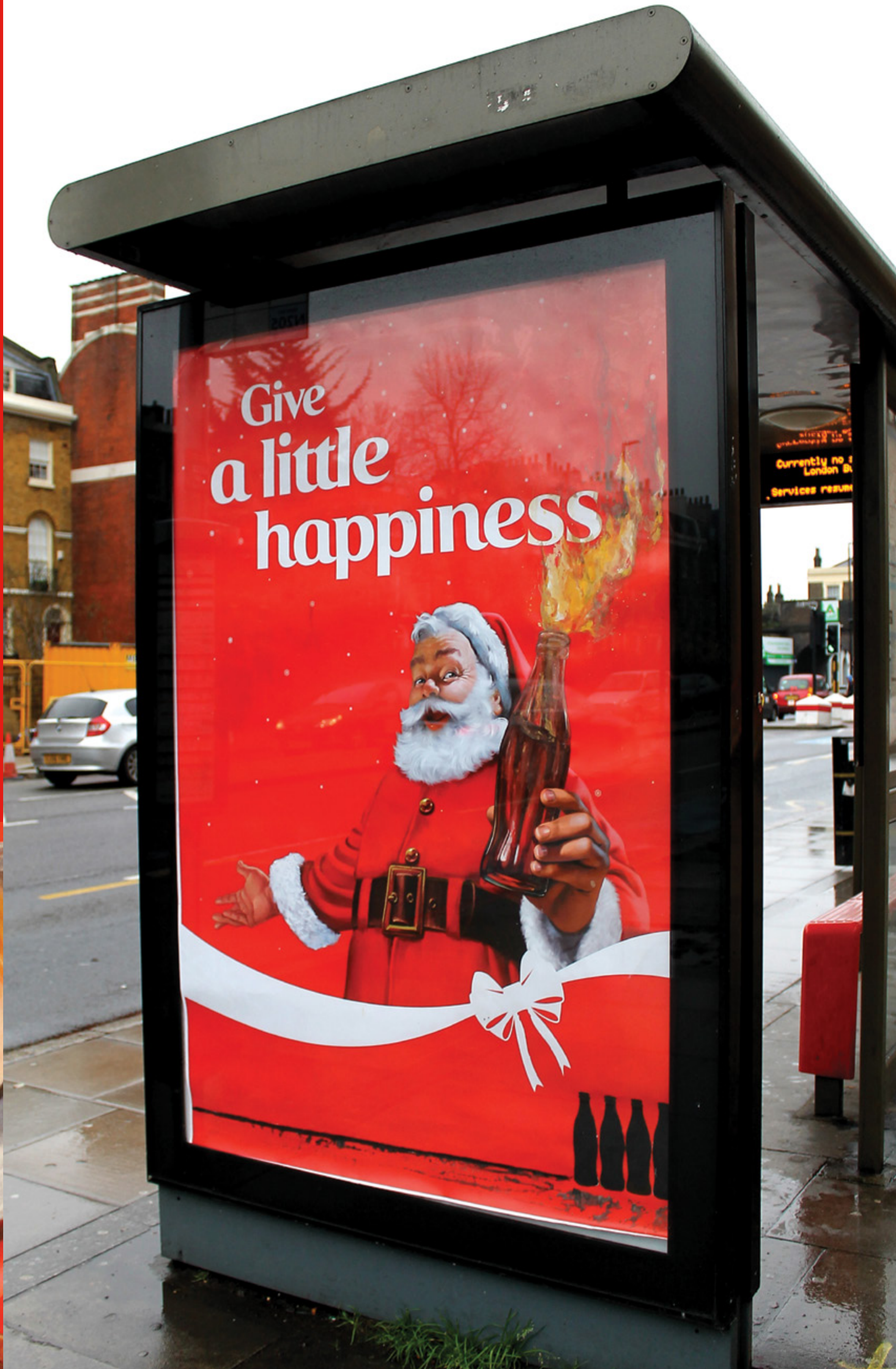
Stencil on paper.
East London.
March 2015.

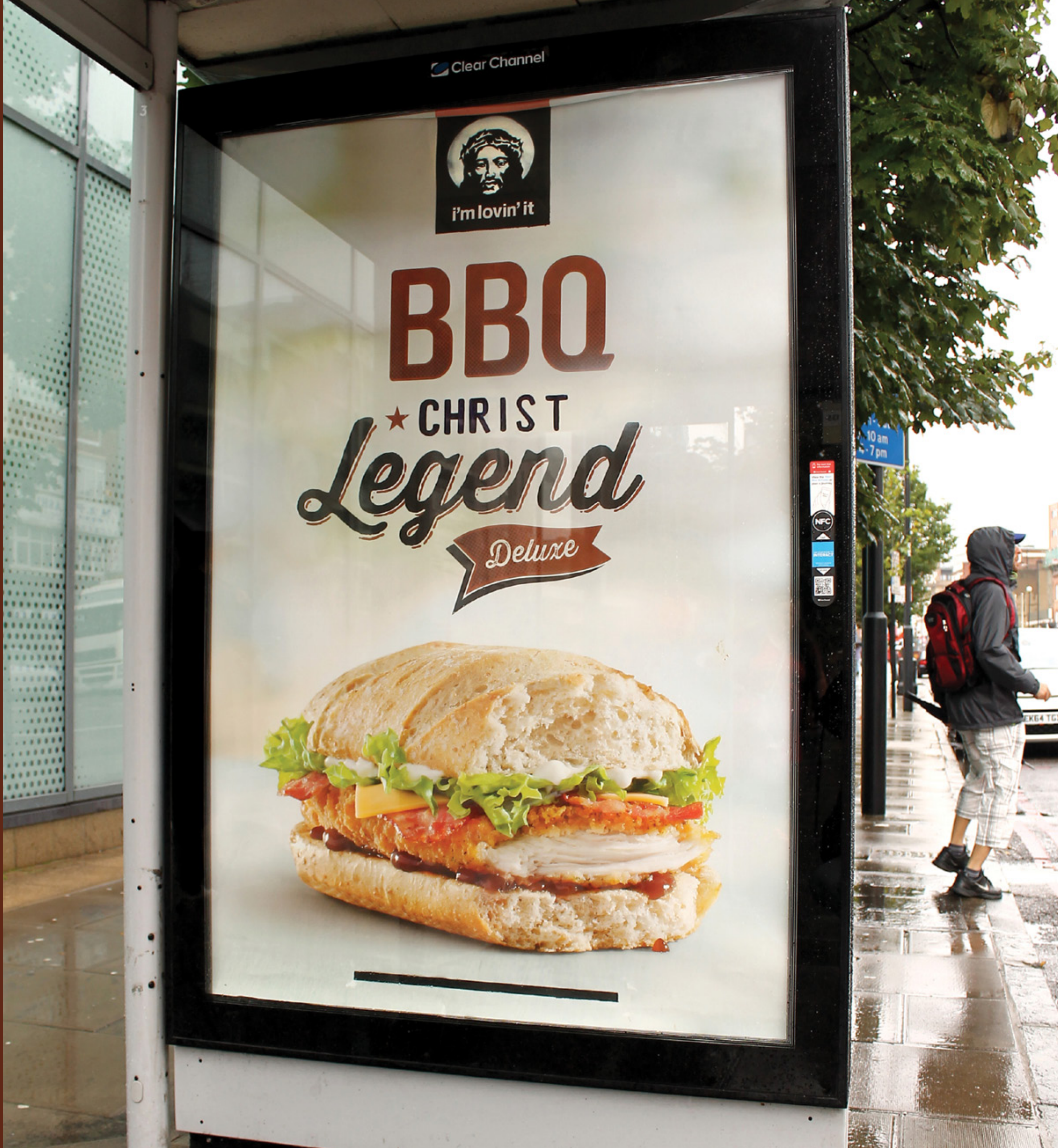
"One option for your subvertising action is to kidnap one of the bus stop shelter posters from the street. Furtively bring it inside your laboratory and then use it as a starting point for your artwork. Do you remember when you used to draw moustaches, glasses and tattoos on every picture in your Dad's newspaper? It's kind of like that, but much more satisfying, because those bus stop ads are made with very posh, quality paper."

Anonymous subvertiser from Special Patrol Group during their monthly Ad Hack Workshop at DIY Space for London.
www.diyspaceforlondon.org @specialpatrols

LITTLE HAPPINESS

Acrylics over an advert.
Bow Road, London.
Christmas 2015.

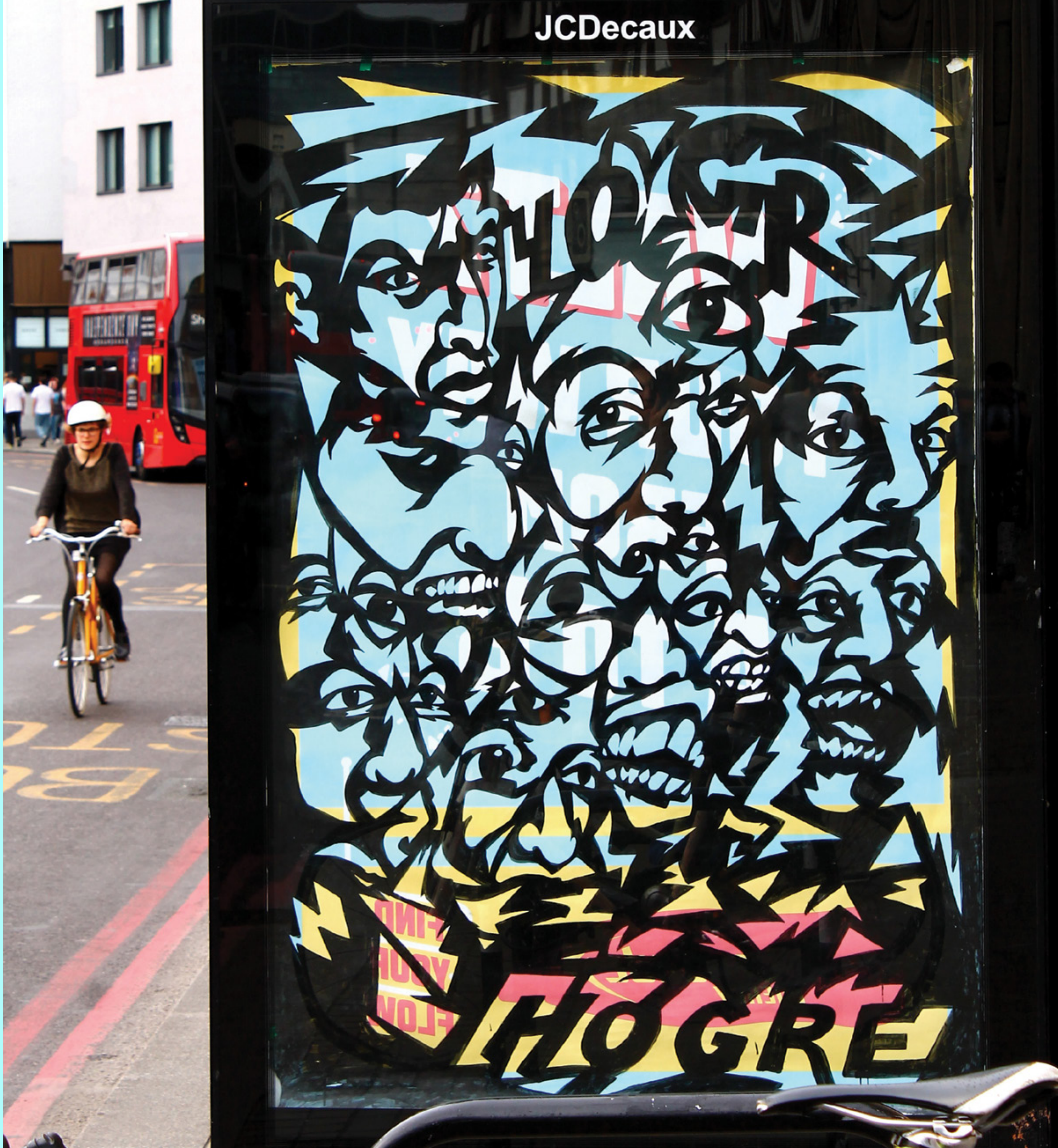



Clear Channel
i'm lovin' it
BBQ
CHRIST
Legend
Deluxe
10 am
- 7 pm
NFC

BBQ CHRIST

Legend Deluxe

Stencil and marker over an advert.
Shadwell, London.
August 2015.


JCDecaux
HOGRE
HOGRE

FREESTYLE

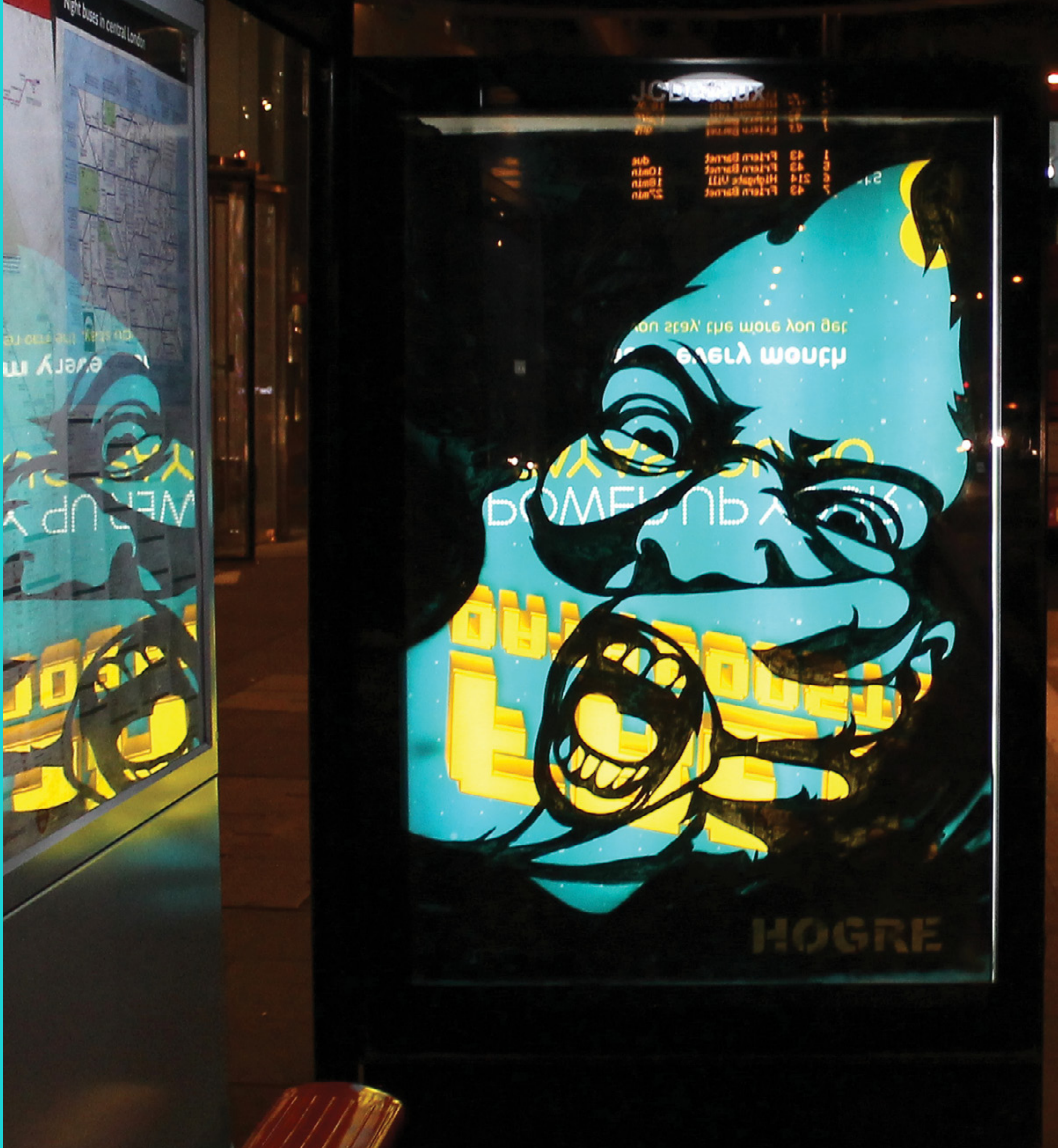
Acrylic and marker over
an advert originally saying
"*FIND YOUR FLOW*"

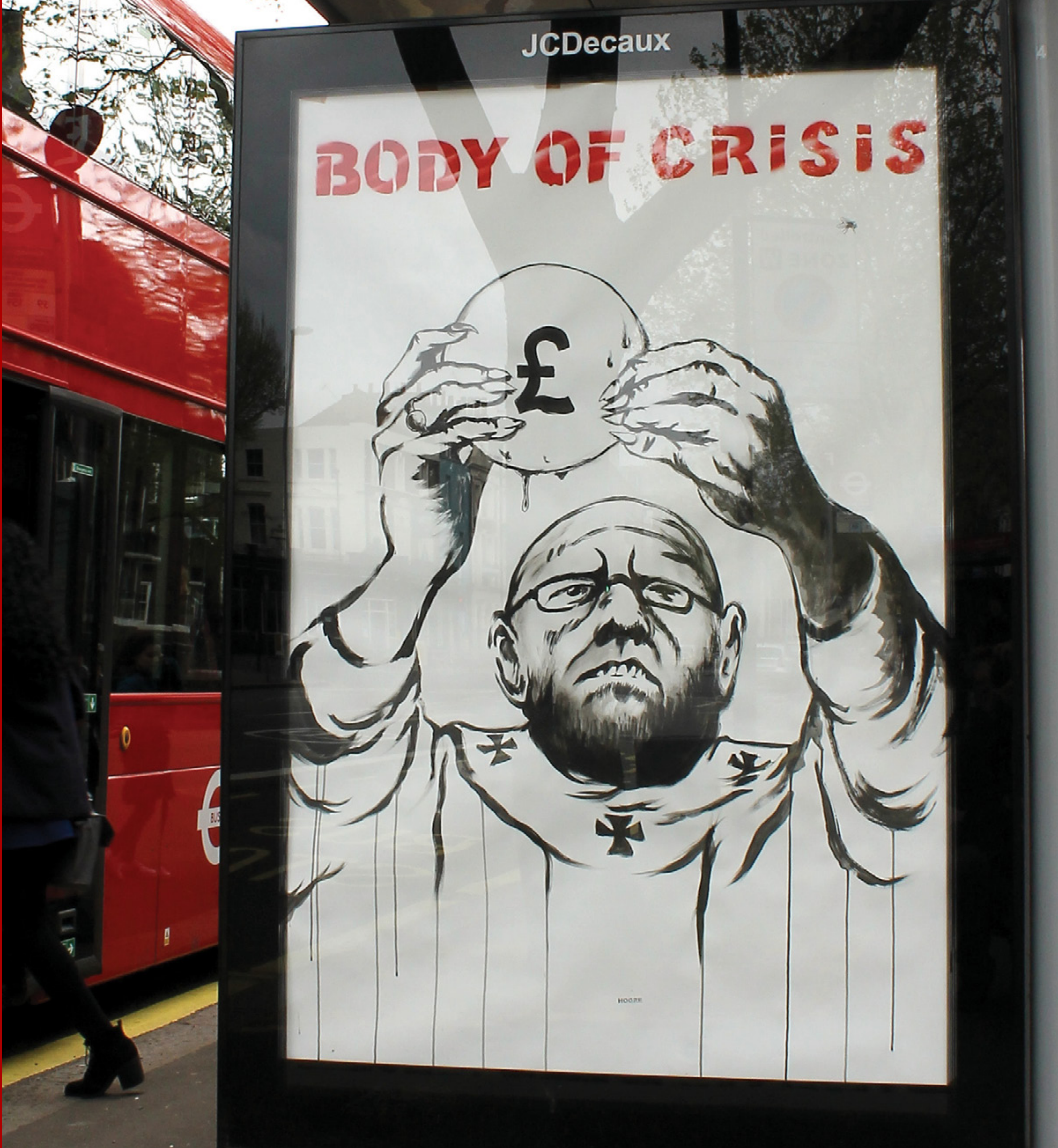
Shoreditch, London.
June 2016.

SUBVERTISER

Acrylic and marker over
an advert originally saying
"*FREE DATA BOOSTS*"

Shoreditch, London.
September 2016.


Night buses in central London
JCDecaux
HOGRE



BODY OF CRISIS

Acrylic, marker and stencil on paper.

Poster first installed in a Kennington Road bus stop and then removed after five days by the company. Five more copies of the same design were then reproduced with a large format printer, and once again installed around the area.

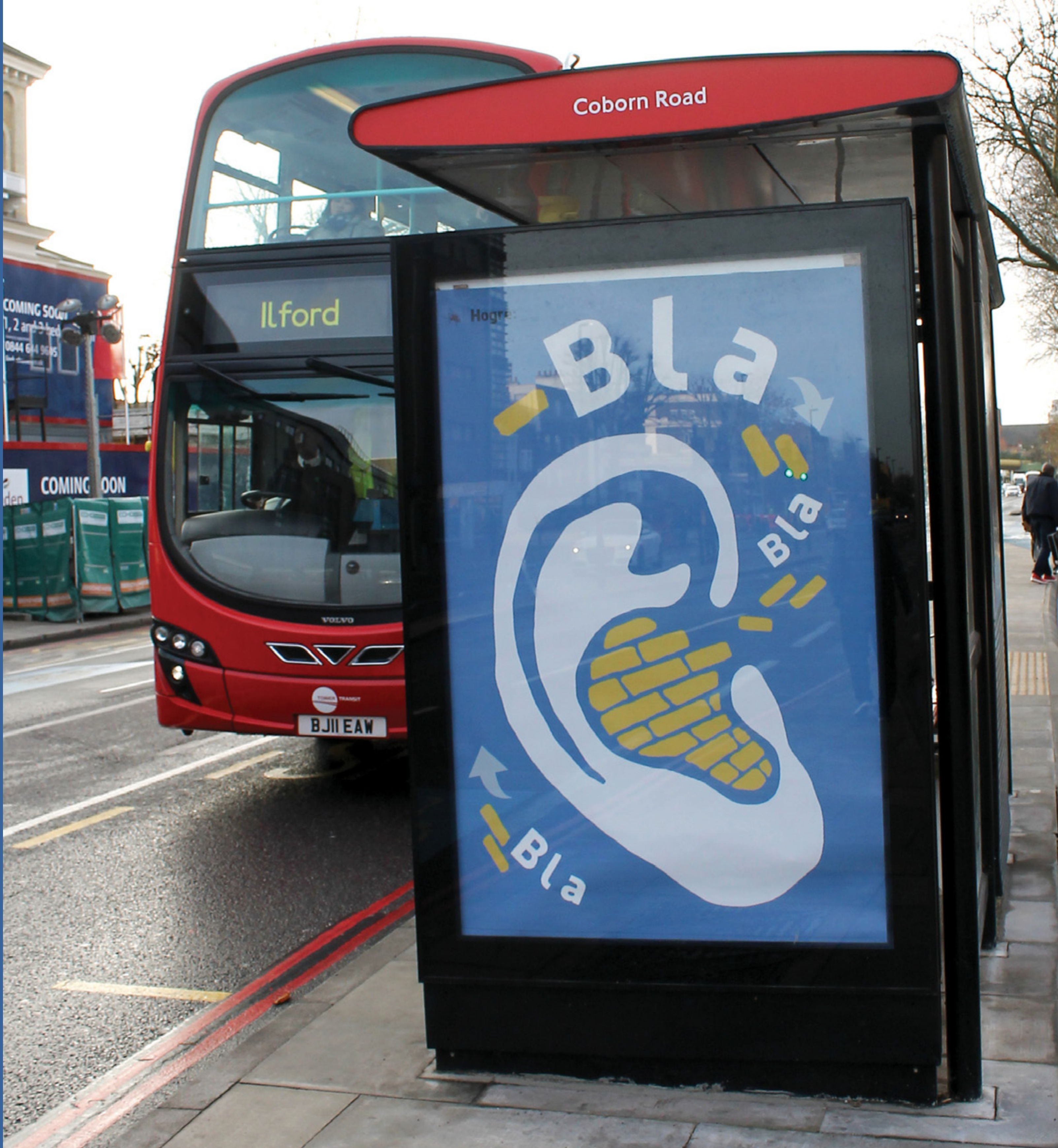
Kennington, London.
May 2016.

"Saying something only once is like never having said it.

Saying something only once is like never having said it."

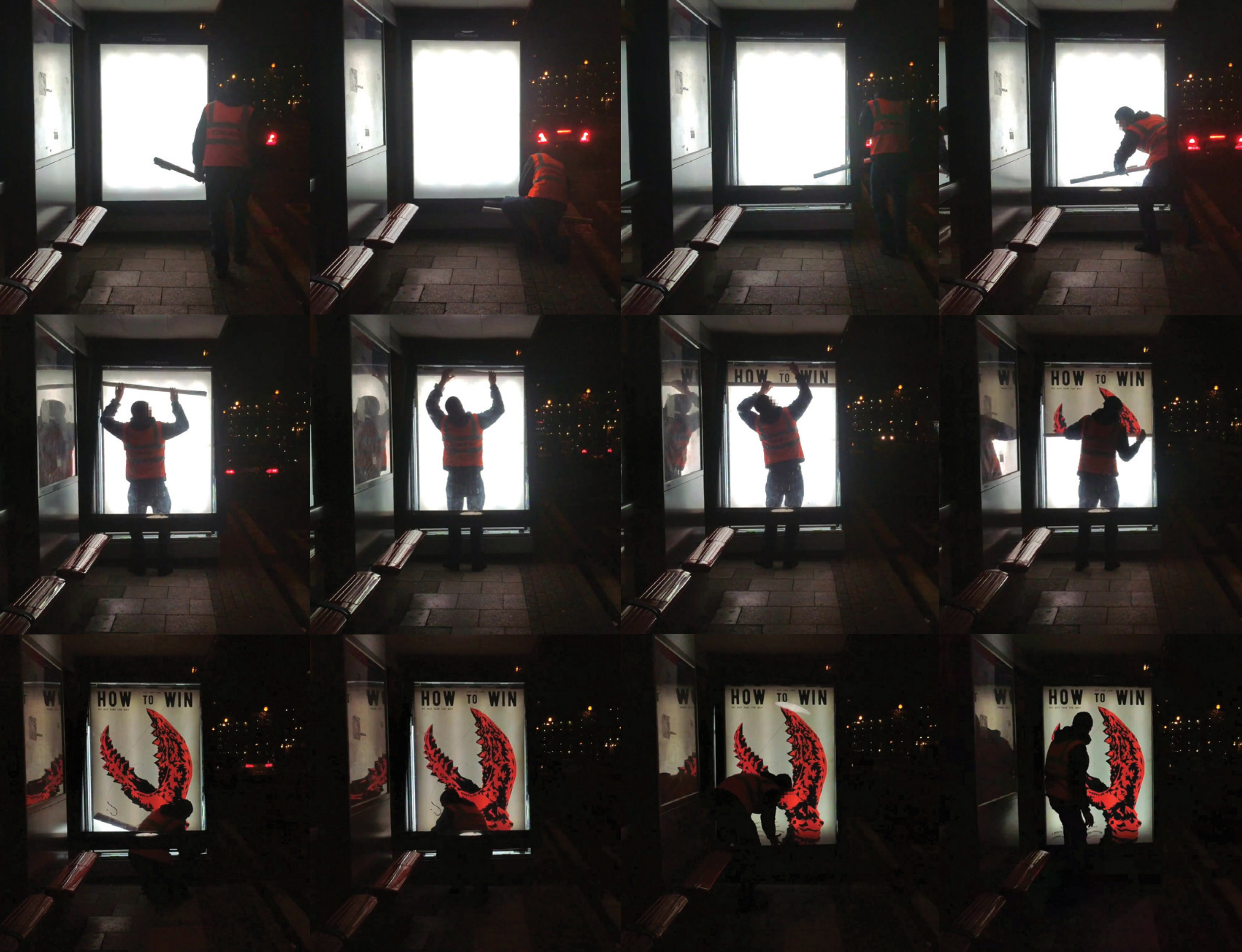
Pippopid

Wibbly Wobbly's parrot


Coborn Road
Ilford
Bla
Bla
Bla
COMING SOON
BJ11 EAW

BLA BLA BLA

Posters installed after the Paris Bataclan attack.
East London, December 2015.


HOW TO WIN

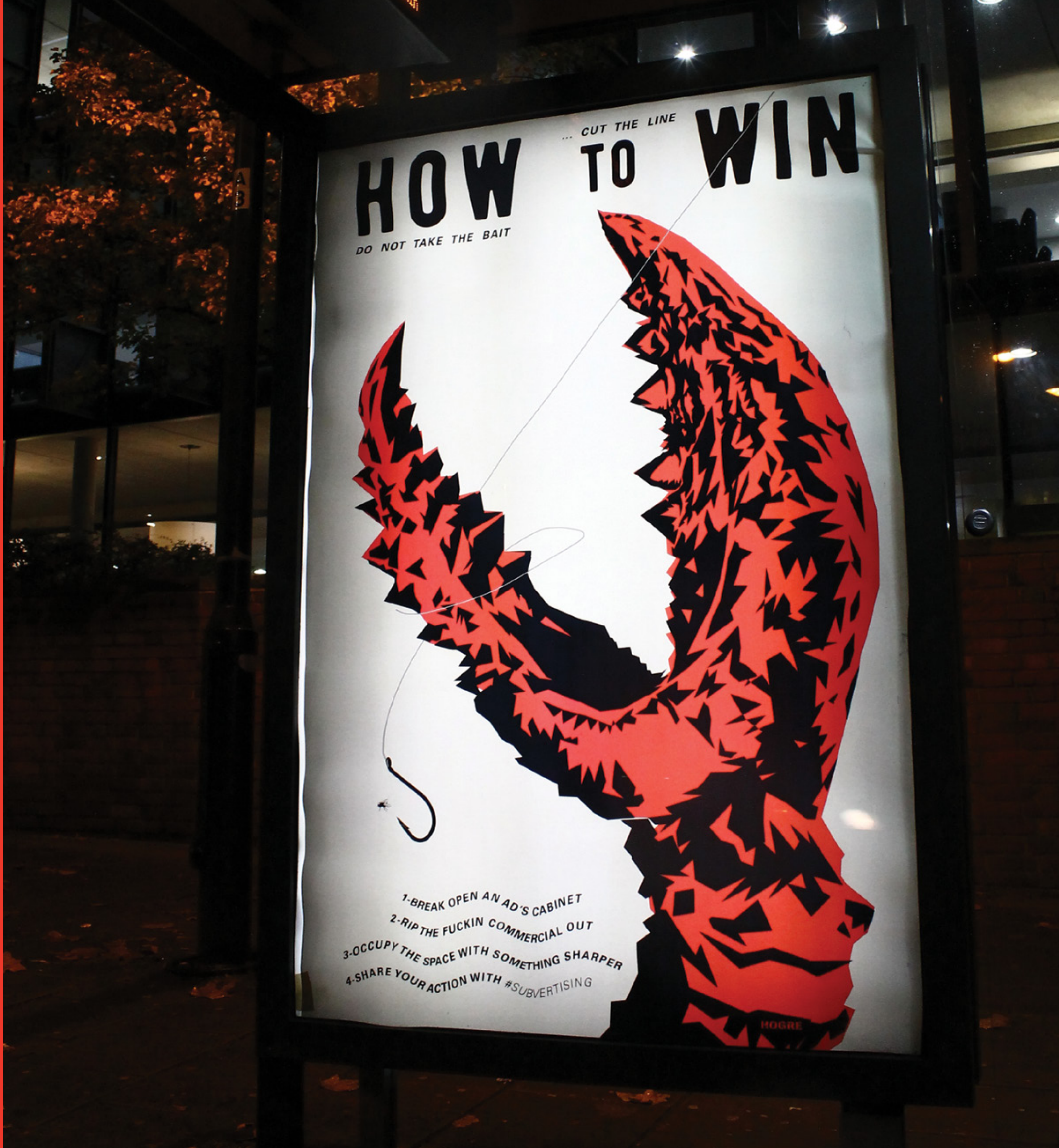
HOW TO WIN

Do not take the bait...
cut the line

1. Break open an ad's cabinet.
2. Rip the fuckin commercial out.
3. Occupy the space with something sharper.
4. Share your action with #Subvertising.

Hogre responds to an invitation to participate in some "competition time...to replace ads with art." The contest was run by a showcasing agency in partnership with outdoor advertising agencies. Hogre's unauthorised posters appeared one week after the deadline, around south and east London.

November, 2016.


HOW
DO NOT TAKE THE BAIT
... CUT THE LINE
TO
WIN
1-BREAK OPEN AN AD'S CABINET
2-RIP THE FUCKIN COMMERCIAL OUT
3-OCCUPY THE SPACE WITH SOMETHING SHARPER
4-SHARE YOUR ACTION WITH #SUBVERTISING
HOGRE

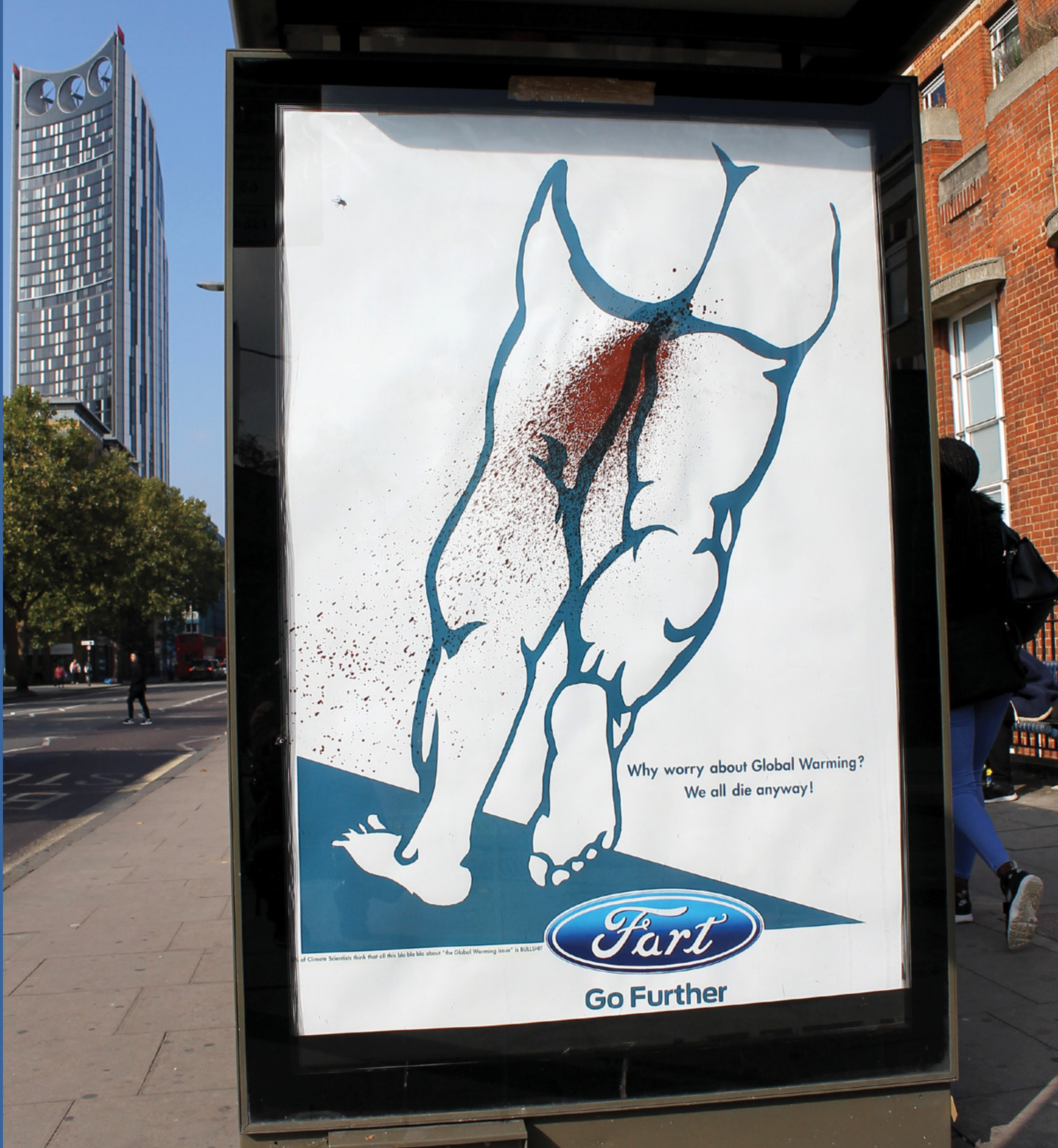
FART
Go Further

3% of climate scientists think that all this blablabla about "the Global Warming issue" is BULLSHIT:

Why worry about Global Warming? We all die anyway!

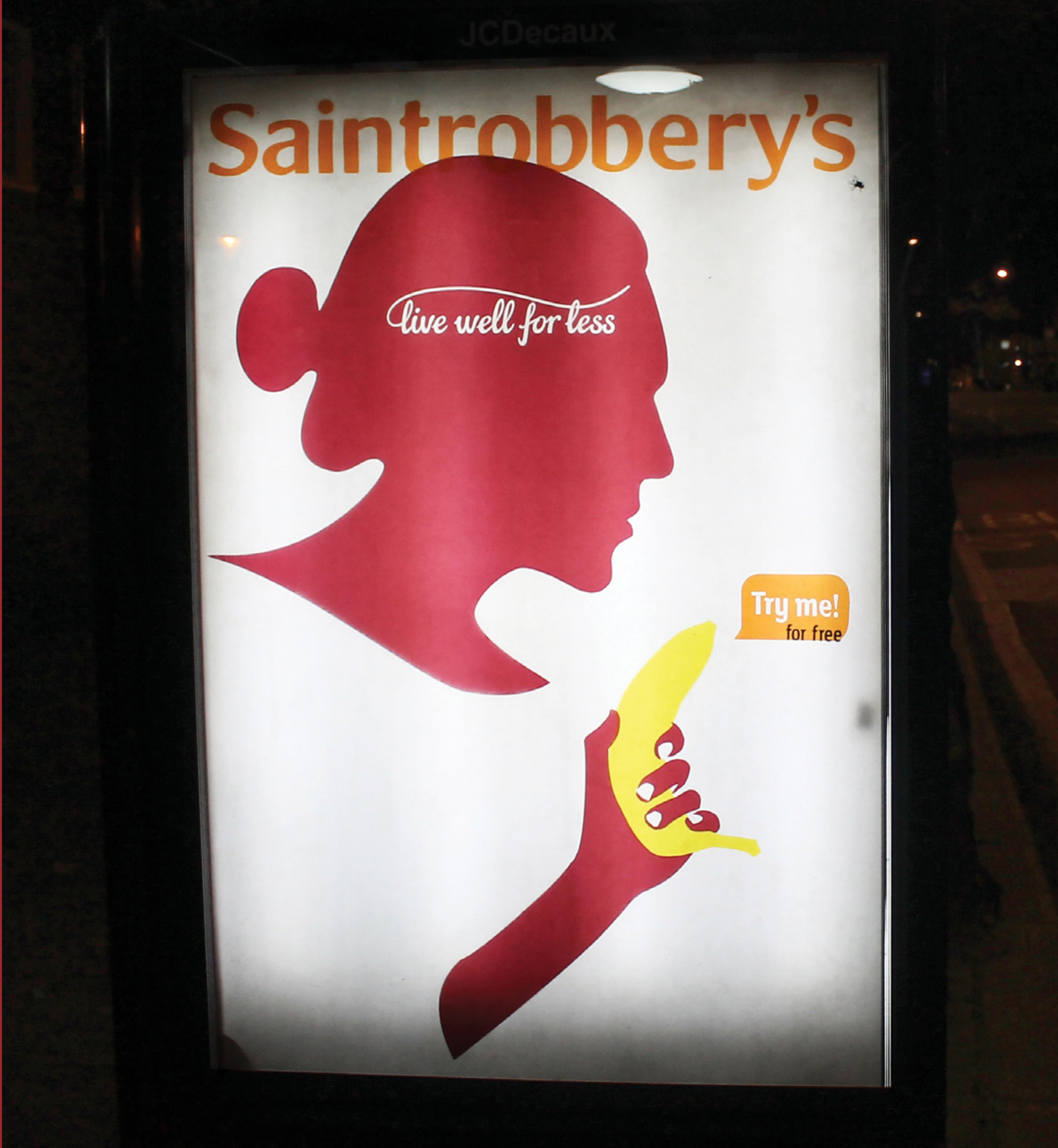
...The other 97% are shitting their pants.

Satire inspired by Earth Overshoot Day 2016. Posters installed in bus stops around central and south London in Autumn 2016.


Why worry about Global Warming?
We all die anyway!
of Climate Scientists think that all this bla bla bla about "the Global Warming issue" is BULLSHIT
Fart
Go Further

“All good thieves know how to live at the expense of someone else but only the greatest know how to do it legally.”

Motto of South London's
Saint Robbers


JCDecaux
Saintrobbery's
live well for less
Try me!
for free

SAINTROBBERY'S

Live well for less.

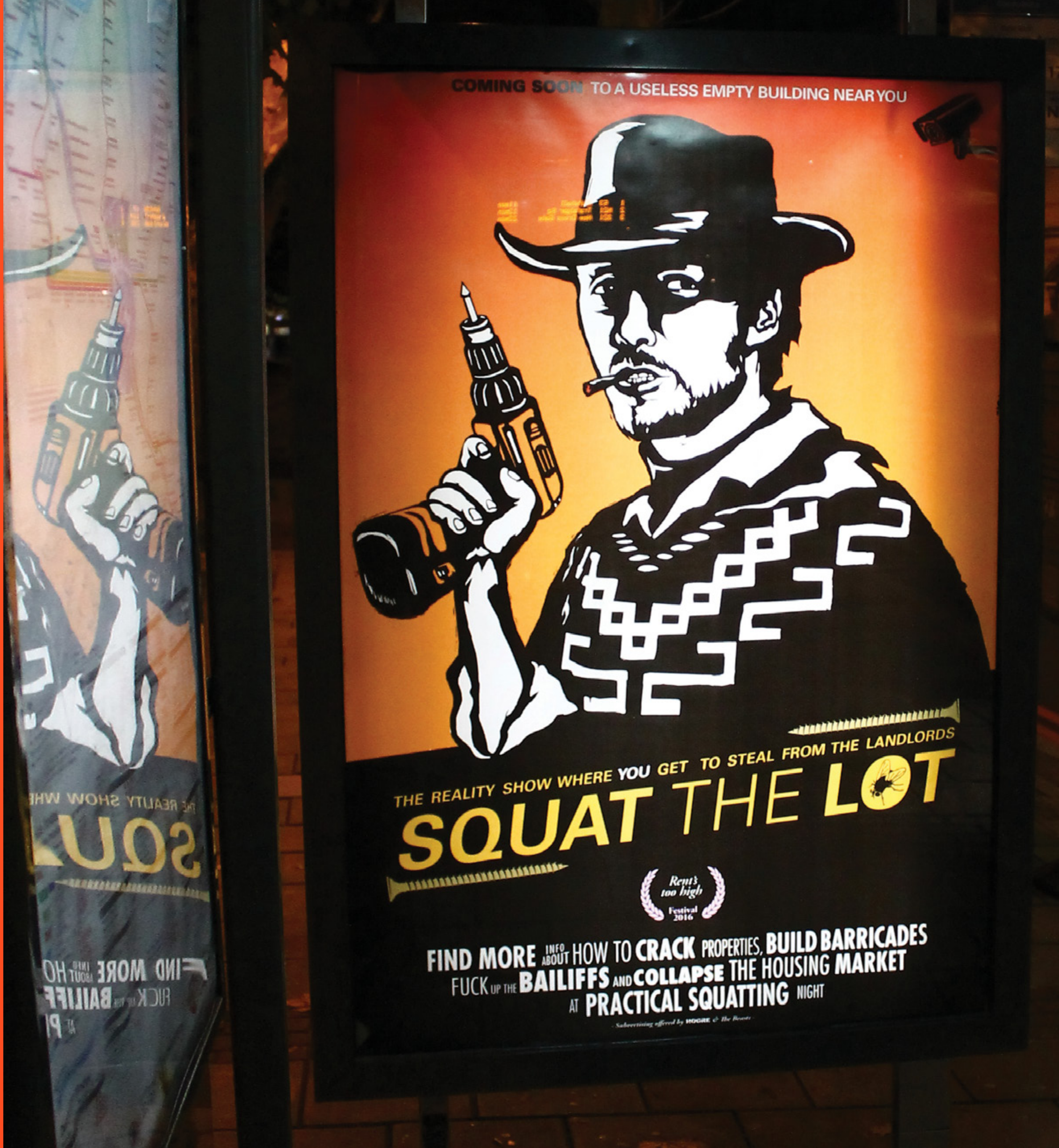
"Try me! for free"

Subvertising campaign in
central and south London.
Autumn 2016.

“For many, myself included, squatting is reactive only in the sense that is a refusal of and a withdrawal from the system as a whole, not only the crisis. Different people come into it for different reasons, but so much of it can be characterised as a rejection of insipid social relations: the family and couple model, enforced work ethic, and the emptiness of modern friendship, struggling to exist meaningfully under the pressure of neoliberalism. Squats can be the space where we re-attach ourselves: in crews, in collectives, where new complicities and necessarily criminal friendship are forged.”

Courtesy of comrade Spilsbury Brunt.

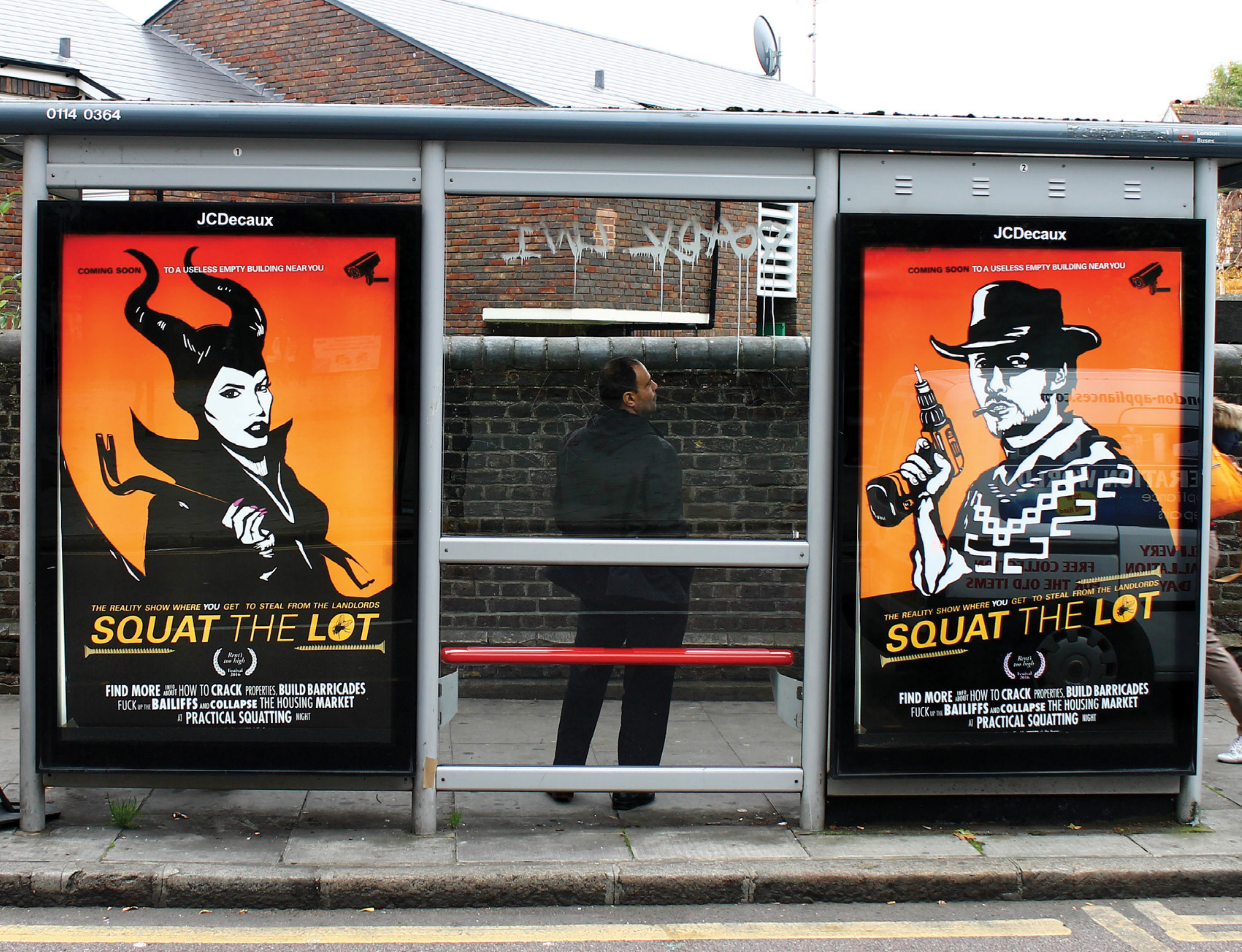
Extract from the article “*Every building an empty!*” published In STRIKE! Magazine Issue 16.


COMING SOON TO A USELESS EMPTY BUILDING NEAR YOU
THE REALITY SHOW WHERE YOU GET TO STEAL FROM THE LANDLORDS
SQUAT THE LOT
Rent's too high Festival 2016
FIND MORE INFO ABOUT HOW TO CRACK PROPERTIES, BUILD BARRICADES
FUCK UP THE BAILIFFS AND COLLAPSE THE HOUSING MARKET
AT PRACTICAL SQUATTING NIGHT
Subvertising offered by HOGRE & The Beasts

SQUAT THE LOT

Bus stop opposite Anarchist Bookfair, West Green, London.

October 2016.


0114 0364
JCDecaux
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SQUAT THE LOT
Rent's too high Festival 2016
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AT PRACTICAL SQUATTING NIGHT

SQUAT THE LOT

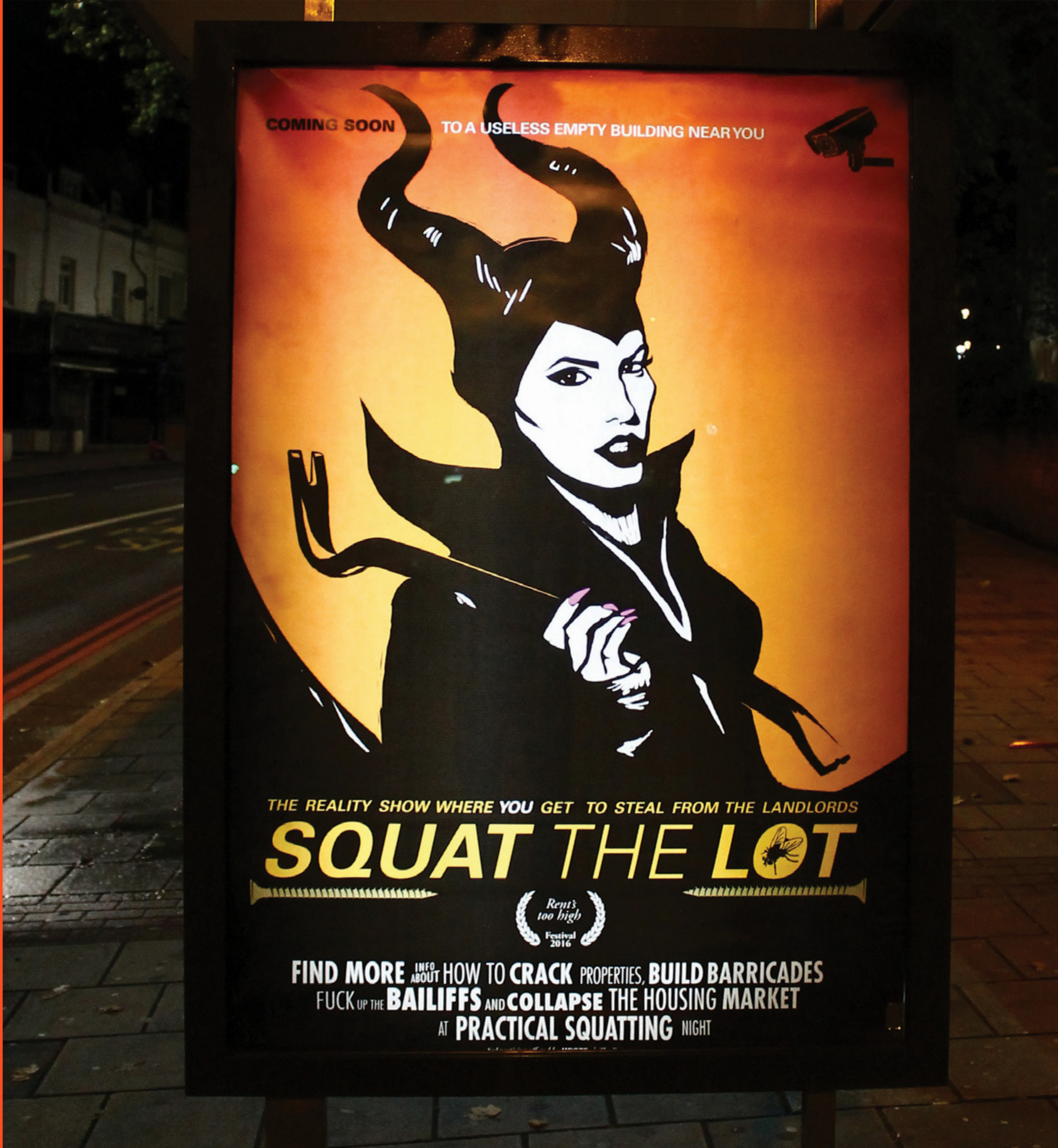
COMING SOON TO A USELESS EMPTY BUILDING NEAR YOU

THE REALITY SHOW WHERE YOU GET TO STEAL FROM THE LANDLORDS.

(Rent's too high Festival 2016)

Find more info about how to crack properties, build barricades, fuck up the bailiffs and collapse the housing market at Practical Squatting nights.

London, October 2016.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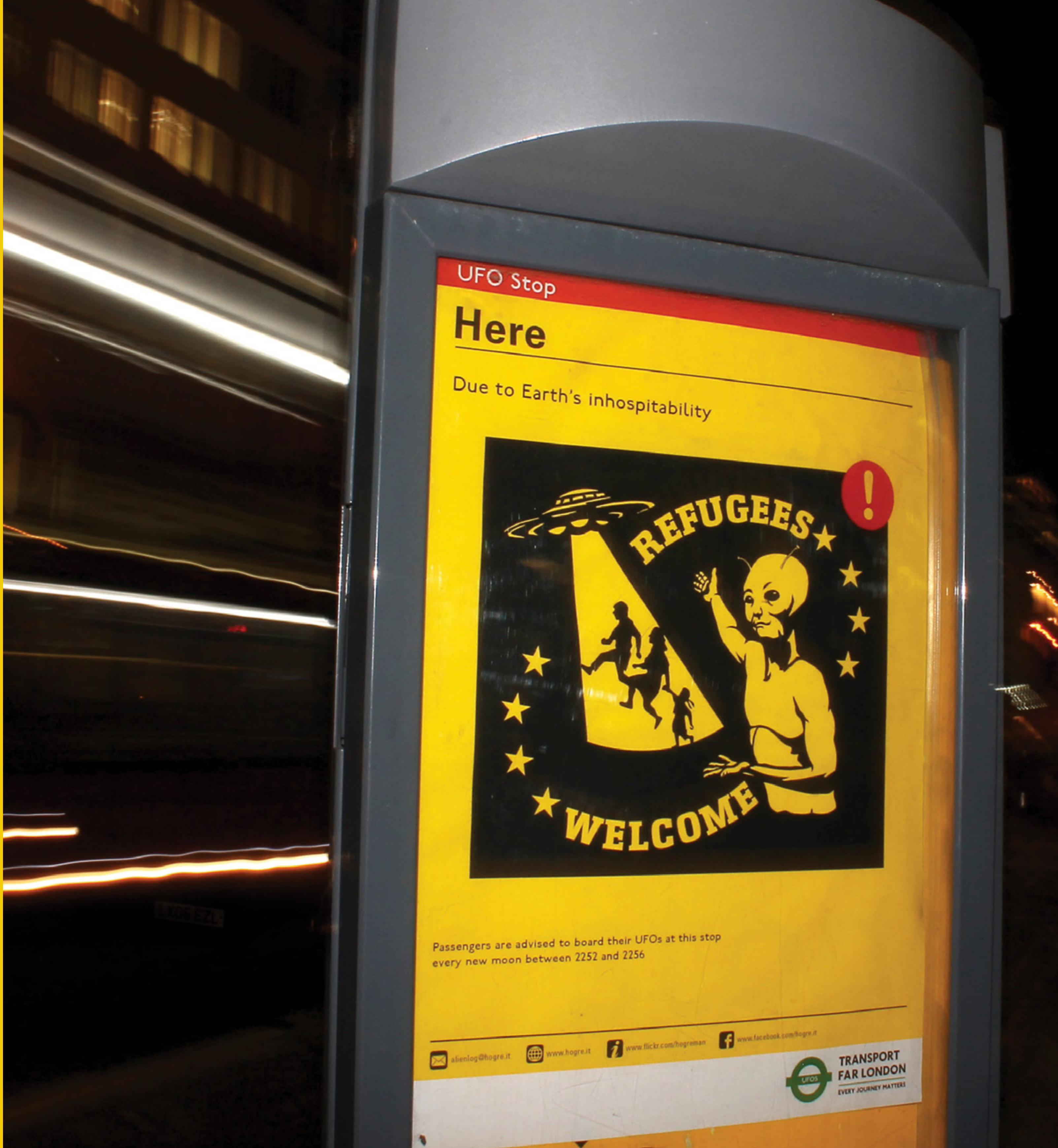
FUCK UP THE BAILIFFS AND COLLAPSE THE HOUSING MARKET
AT PRACTICAL SQUATTING NIGHT

“Every time a human being observes an unidentified object in the sky – and behind a mere unidentified object, it notices or seems to recognise an extra-terrestrial form of life – it’s already dreaming of the possible existence, somewhere in the universe, of a totally different model of social organisation.”

MIR (Man In Red)

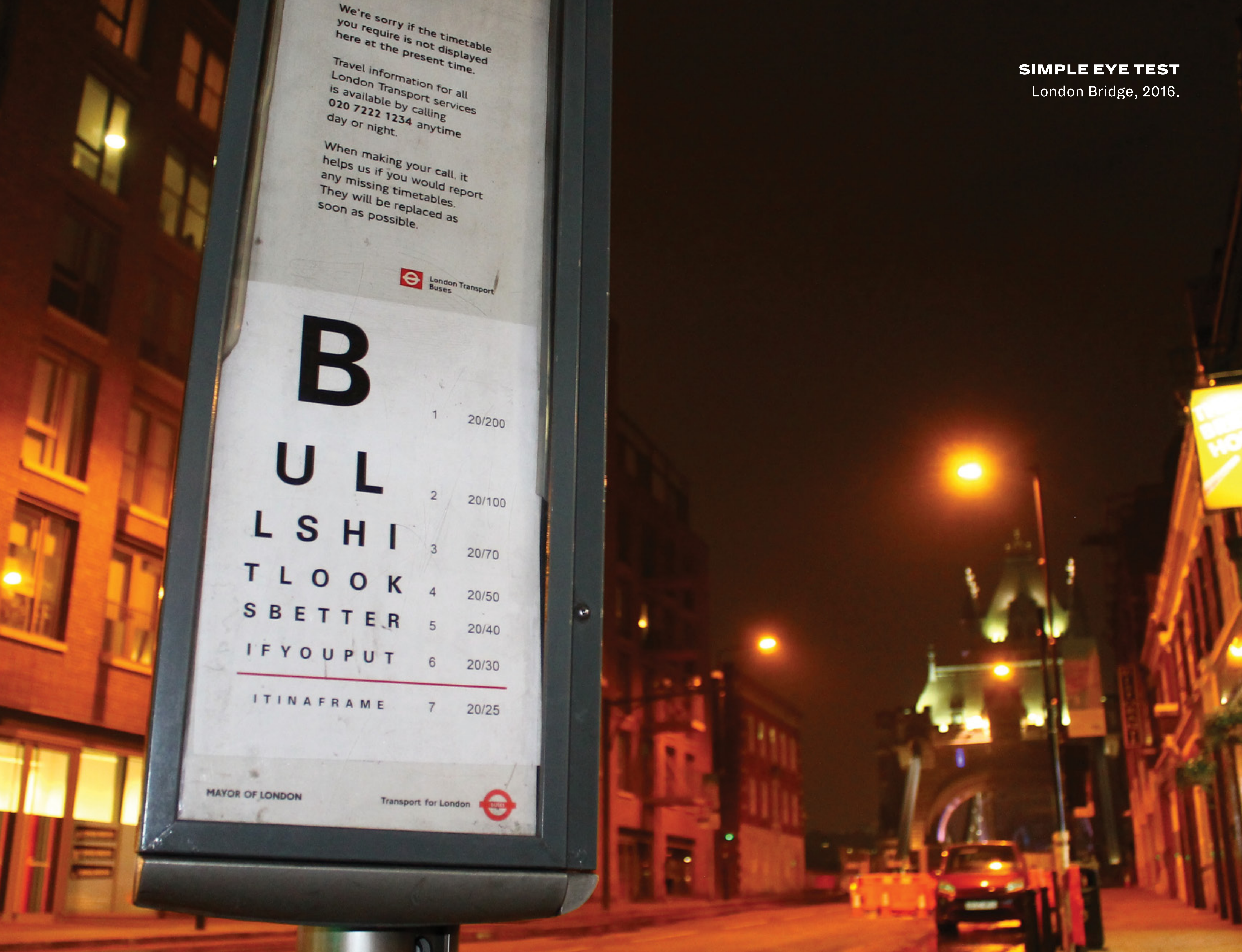

UFO Stop
Here
Due to Earth's inhospitability
REFUGEES WELCOME
Passengers are advised to board their UFOs at this stop every new moon between 2252 and 2256
alienlog@hogre.it
www.hogre.it
www.flickr.com/hogreman
www.facebook.com/hogre.it
UFOs
TRANSPORT FAR LONDON
EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

UFO STOP
HERE
Due to Earth's inhospitability

Passengers are advised to board their UFOs at this stop every new moon between 22:52 and 22:56.

Disused bus stop near St Paul's Cathedral.

London, January 2016.


We're sorry if the timetable you require is not displayed here at the present time.
Travel information for all London Transport services is available by calling 020 7222 1234 anytime day or night.
When making your call, it helps us if you would report any missing timetables. They will be replaced as soon as possible.
London Transport Buses
B
1 20/200
U L
2 20/100
L S H I
3 20/70
T L O O K
4 20/50
S B E T T E R
5 20/40
I F Y O U P U T
6 20/30
I T I N A F R A M E
7 20/25
MAYOR OF LONDON
Transport for London
BUSES

SIMPLE EYE TEST

London Bridge, 2016.

JOINT
ENTERPRISE

Horseferry Road
JCDecaux
30 000
PEOPLE
every year in the UK
DETAINED
WITH
NO
CHARGE
FOR NOT HAVING THE RIGHT PASSPORT ...
OR ENOUGH MONEY
detainedvoices.com

Black holes are fun

Modern scientists agree on the fact that if the force of gravity exceeds the force of expansion, then the universe would collapse on itself. This process is called the Big Crunch, and it is the opposite of the Big Bang.

Because of their immense gravitational force, Black Holes are able to expand exponentially: the more stuff a black hole attracts, the more its gravitational pull increases.

For some nihilists such an hypothesis, rather than being a threat, opens the doors to a theory of eternal return to life, from a physical point of view as well as philosophical. In fact, the direct consequence of the Big Crunch will be a new Big Bang, which will actually take the universe into a new cycle of life, perhaps similar to this one to which we are witnesses.

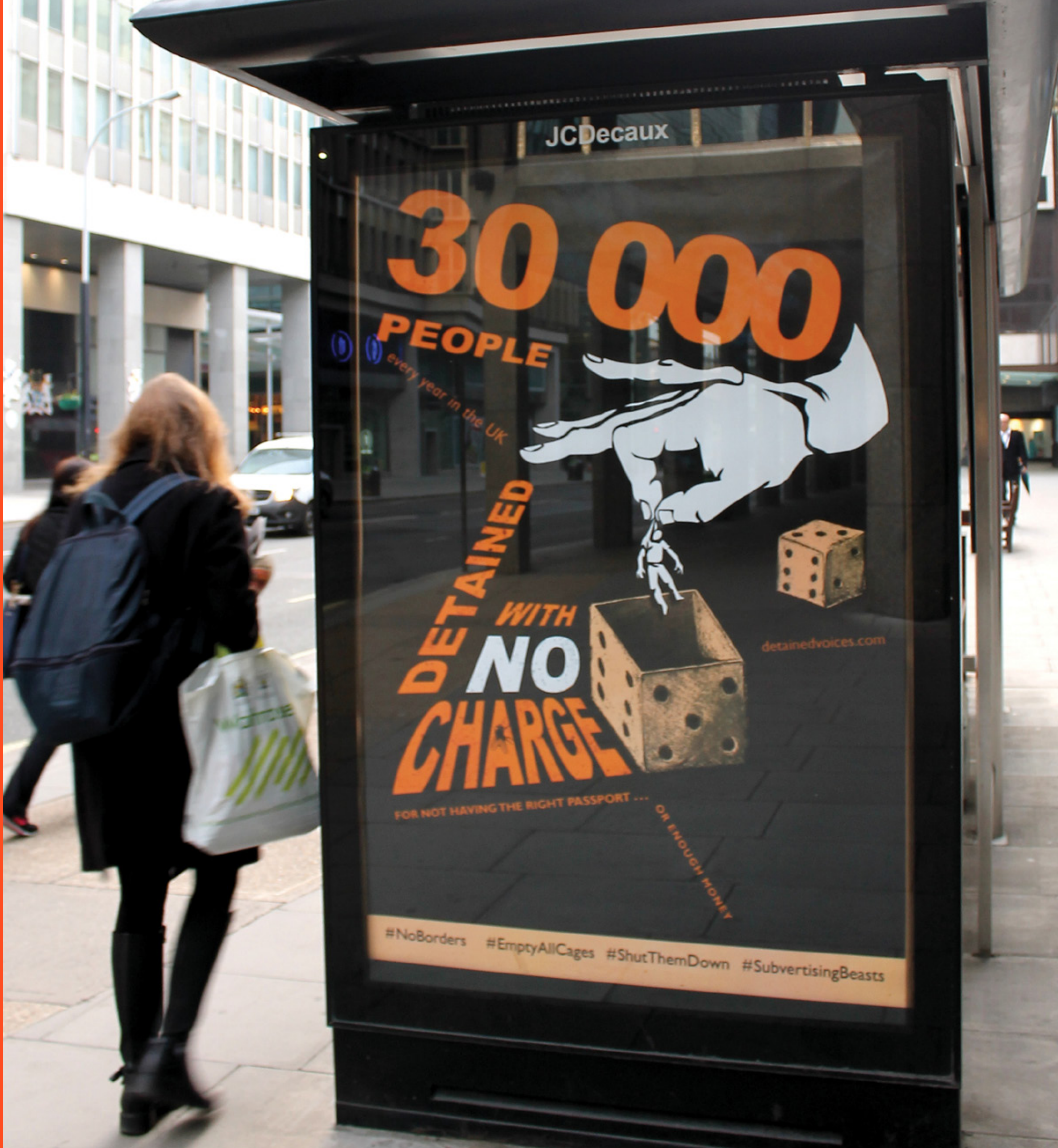
At this point what we should ask ourselves is: How do we avoid a climatic disaster, a new global war or a nuclear holocaust?

But also: How can we prepare an interstellar overdrive that will lead us to achieve, all together, in different but fair conditions, a good black hole?

"In solidarity with the work of Detained Voices this propaganda has popped up on bus stops all over London. Stops were chosen near selected targets involved in the detention regime, including the Home Office, Houses of Parliament, Barnados, Mitie, and G4S."

No Borders No Binaries,
for the national day against
detention centers.

detainedvoices.com


JCDecaux
30 000
PEOPLE
every year in the UK
DETAINED
WITH
NO
CHARGE
FOR NOT HAVING THE RIGHT PASSPORT ...
OR ENOUGH MONEY
detainedvoices.com
#NoBorders #EmptyAllCages #ShutThemDown #SubvertisingBeasts

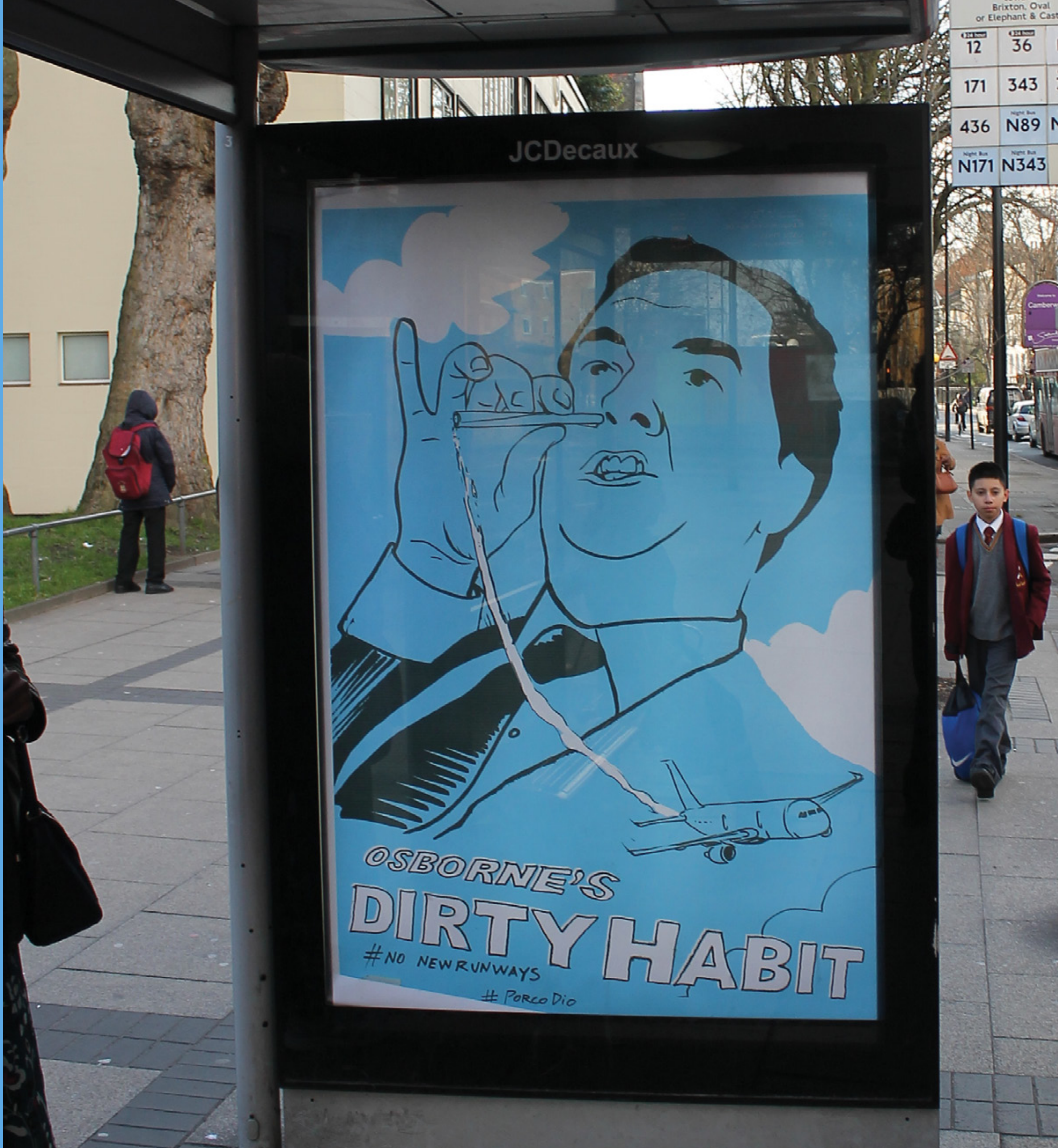
30.000 PEOPLE EVERY YEAR IN THE UK DETAINED WITH NO CHARGE

FOR NOT HAVING THE RIGHT PASSPORT OR ENOUGH MONEY

London, May 2016.

"Thousands will see their home demolished to make way for the new runway. Only 15% are responsible for 70% of UK's international flights, so airport expansion doesn't really benefit the average person who goes on holiday once or twice a year. Plus, a large proportion of Heathrow flights are short haul, whose routes could be better serviced by improved rail infrastructure. More crucially, flying is the most emissions-intensive form of transport and the fastest growing cause of climate change. It is not possible for the UK government to expand airports and meet existing commitments on climate action."

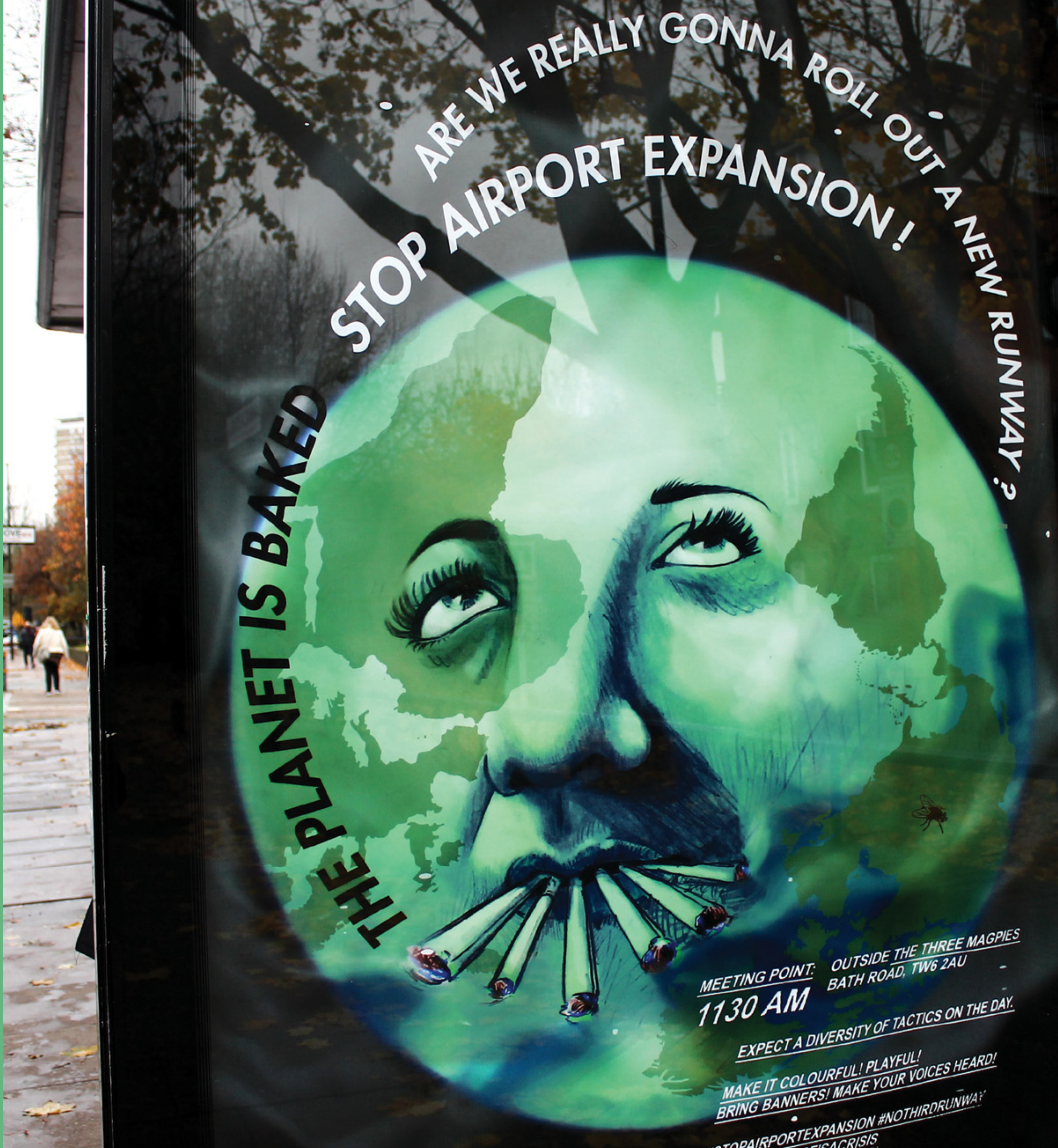
RisingUp


JCDecaux
OSBORNE'S
DIRTY HABIT
#NO NEW RUNWAYS
# PORCO DIO
Brixton, Oval
or Elephant & Castle
12
36
171
343
436
N89
N171
N343

Osborne's
DIRTY HABIT

#NoNewRunways
#PorcoDio

Plane Stupid
London, February 2016.


ARE WE REALLY GONNA ROLL OUT A NEW RUNWAY ?
STOP AIRPORT EXPANSION !
THE PLANET IS BAKED
MEETING POINT:
1130 AM
OUTSIDE THE THREE MAGPIES
BATH ROAD, TW6 2AU
EXPECT A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS ON THE DAY.
MAKE IT COLOURFUL! PLAYFUL!
BRING BANNERS! MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD!
TOPAIRPORTEXPANSION #NOTHIRDRUNWAY
EISACRISIS

THE PLANET IS BAKED

Are we really gonna roll out a new runway? Stop airport expansion!

Campain for the demo against Heathrow enlargement.

London, November 2016.

"Big business and the British state have a long history of spying on political activists. In the early twentieth century, the security services and leading industrialists set up the Economic League, a body that infiltrated left-wing campaign groups and compiled a huge database of people that the establishment considered to be 'troublemakers'.

In 2009, it was discovered that another shady organisation called The Consulting Association had been keeping construction workers and environmental campaigners under surveillance. Secret files were used to blacklist union members and deny them employment. Many workers faced years of unemployment and family hardship after standing up for basic rights or safety on building sites.

Once again, undercover police units that spy on British citizens involved in progressive politics shared information with the new illegal blacklisting conspiracy. The mainstream media have virtually ignored this human rights scandal."

Dave Smith, Blacklisting Support Group.

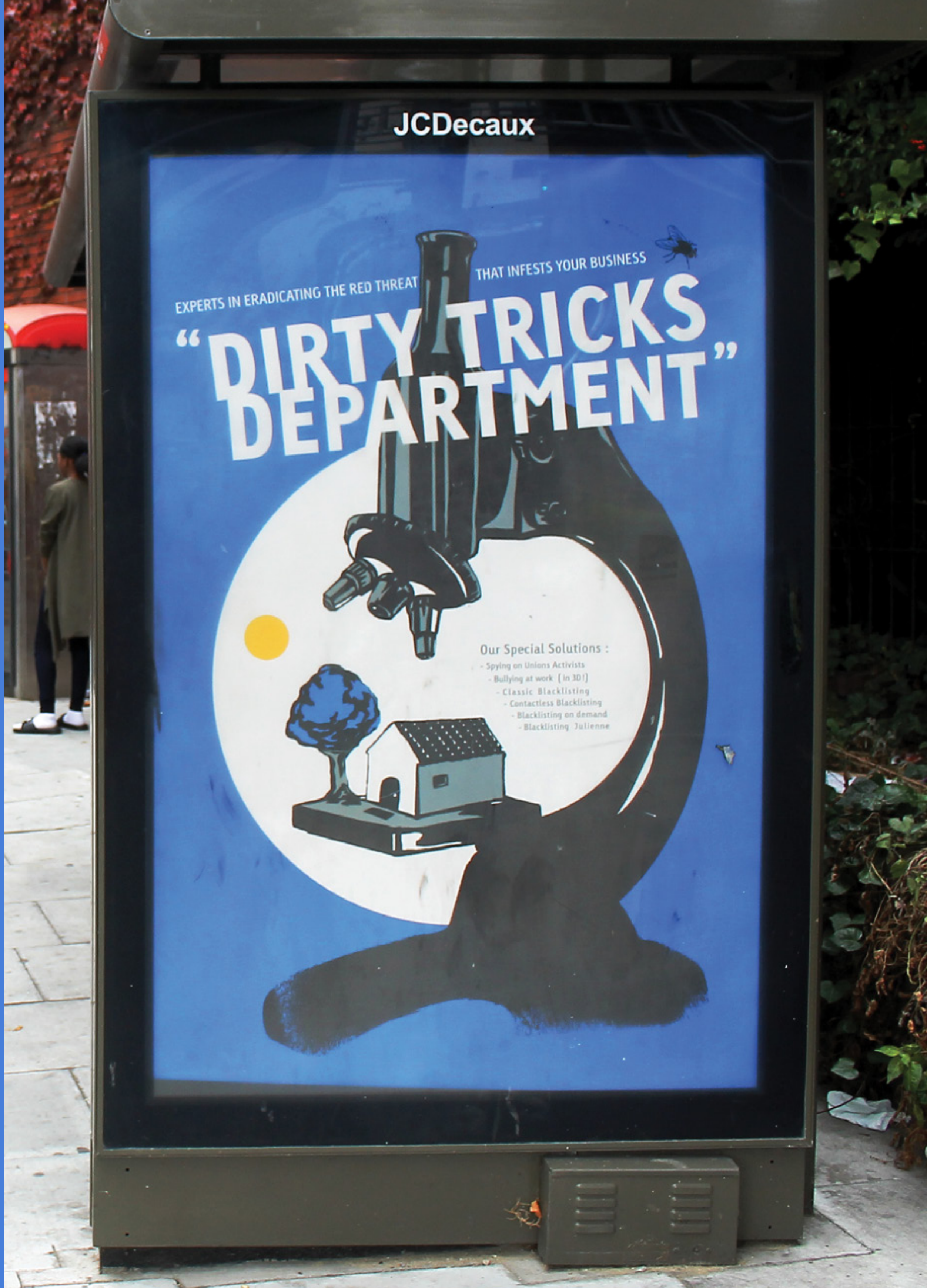
DIRTY TRICKS DEPARTMENT

Experts in eradicating the red threat that infests your business!

OUR SPECIAL SOLUTIONS:
Spying on Union Activists; Bullying at Work (in 3D!); Classic Blacklisting; Contactless Blacklisting; Blacklisting on Demand; Blacklisting Julienne.

Posters installed around New Cross, Deptford, Greenwich and Surrey Quays, London.

October 2016.


JCDecaux
EXPERTS IN ERADICATING THE RED THREAT
THAT INFESTS YOUR BUSINESS
"DIRTY TRICKS DEPARTMENT"
Our Special Solutions :
- Spying on Unions Activists
- Bullying at work (in 3D!)
- Classic Blacklisting
- Contactless Blacklisting
- Blacklisting on demand
- Blacklisting Julienne

"Printing posters costs money and we don't have any: that's the conundrum. To solve it we implemented a funding model at the Blacklist Support Group Conference in 2016, which featured an art exhibition alongside the talks and discussions.

A small group of us subvertisers, assisted by friendly print-makers, collaborated on a series of prints that visualised the topics of blacklisting, whistle-blowing, bullying in the work place and undercover policing that were discussed at the conference.

Our plan was simple: we produced high-quality, limited edition prints and sold them at affordable prices to people who came to the conference.

Producing and selling 'variants' allowed us to raise money for future subvertising activities. Plus people have something pretty for their walls, which also serves a revolutionary purpose."

Art Against Blacklisting

PIG'S EAR PLUGS

instructions for selective hearing:

1. Roll the plug into a very thin crease free cylinder

2. Neither confirm nor deny

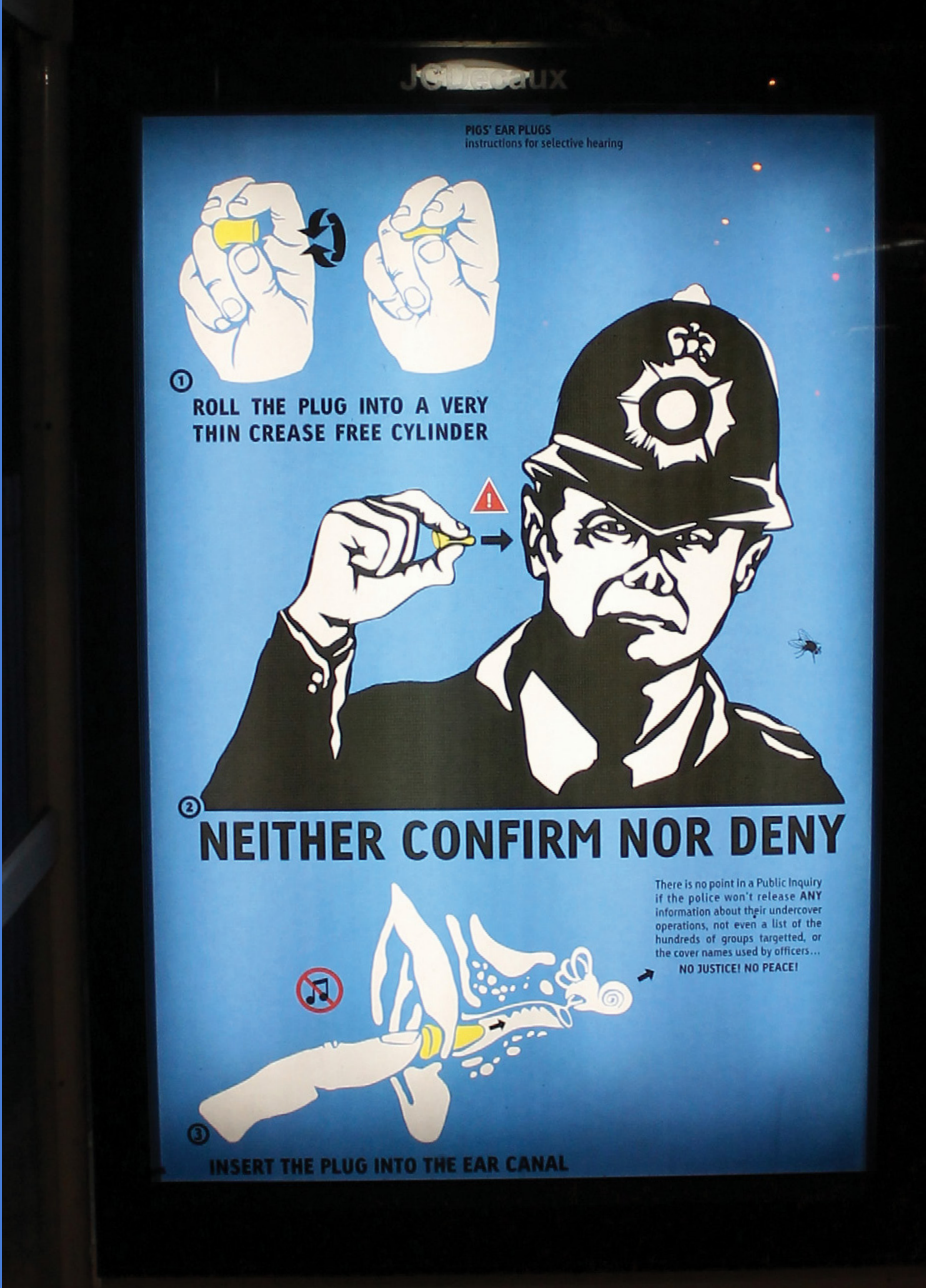
3. Insert the plug into the ear canal

There is no point in a Public Inquiry if the police won't release ANY information about their undercover operations, not even a list of the hundreds of groups targetted, or the cover names used by officers...

NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!

Posters denouncing undercover police strategy, installed around New Cross, Deptford, Greenwich and Surrey Quays, London.

October 2016.


JCDecaux
PIGS' EAR PLUGS
instructions for selective hearing
①
ROLL THE PLUG INTO A VERY THIN CREASE FREE CYLINDER
②
NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY
There is no point in a Public Inquiry if the police won't release ANY information about their undercover operations, not even a list of the hundreds of groups targetted, or the cover names used by officers...
NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!
③
INSERT THE PLUG INTO THE EAR CANAL

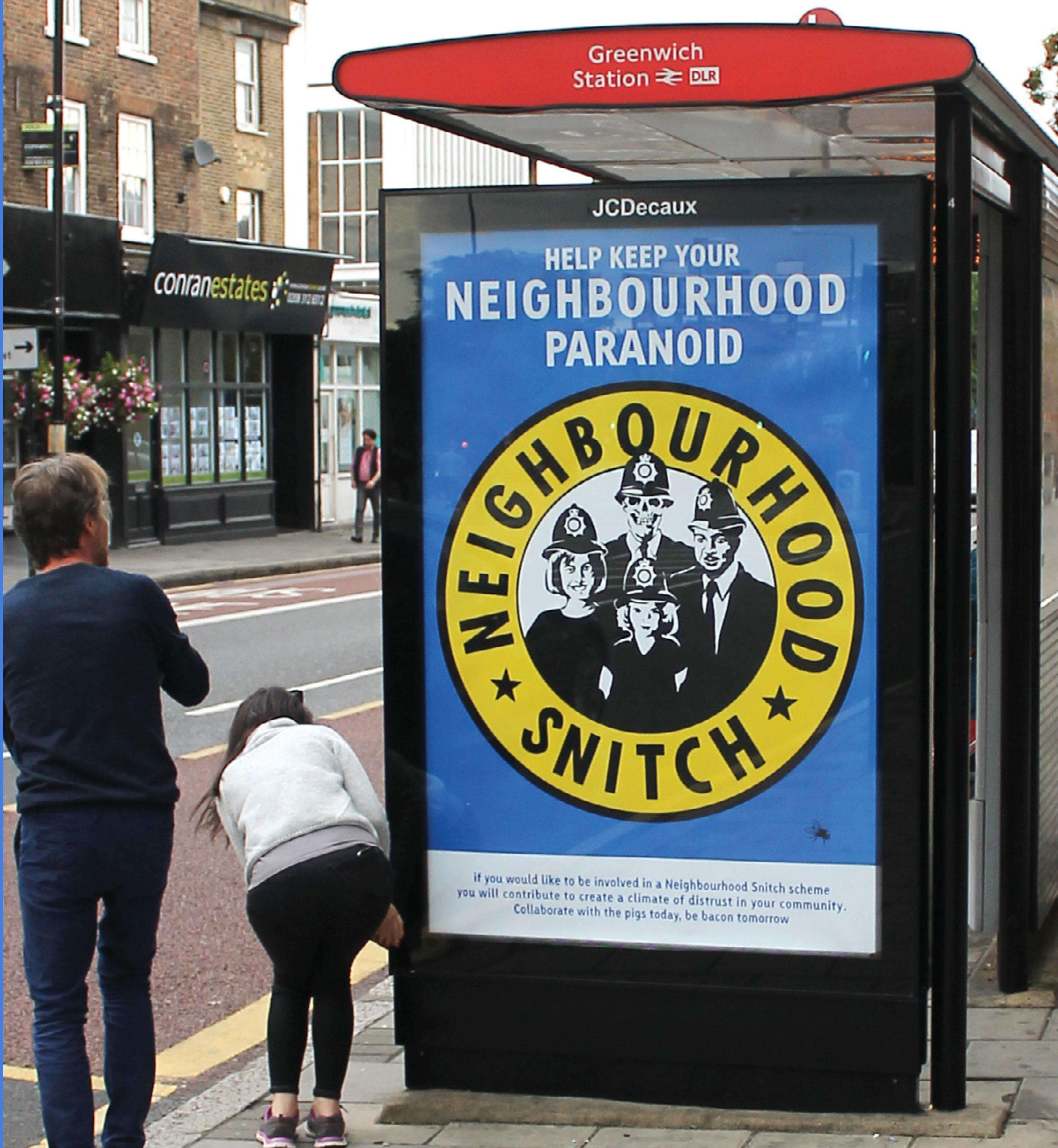
HELP KEEP YOUR **NEIGHBOURHOOD PARANOID**

If you would like to be involved in a Neighbourhood Snitch scheme you will contribute to creating a climate of distrust in your community.

Collaborate with the pigs today, be bacon tomorrow.

Subvertising of "Neighbourhood Watch" propaganda installed around New Cross, Deptford, Greenwich and Surrey Quays, London.

October 2016.


Greenwich
Station DLR
conranestates
JCDecaux
HELP KEEP YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PARANOID
NEIGHBOURHOOD
SNITCH
If you would like to be involved in a Neighbourhood Snitch scheme
you will contribute to create a climate of distrust in your community.
Collaborate with the pigs today, be bacon tomorrow

"Once upon a time, there was a Queen who ruled a great and glorious land. Favourite amongst Her subjects were two court painters she was very proud of. One day the Queen decided to determine which of them was the better artist and so she organised a contest between the two masters.

In front of a stunned crowd the first painter composed a celestial landscape, mixing colours as if they were musical notes of a piano played by the divine, reaching a realism that could fool Mother Nature herself.

When it was the turn of the second artist, he calmly took the largest of his brushes, its tip the diameter of a cannon ball. Then he dipped it in a blue ultramarine paint; the brush slid softly along the floor drawing a blue stripe, sinuous and placid. At this point the artist revealed a cage with a live hen inside it. He took her gently in his hands, he dipped the hen's legs in a pot of scarlet paint and then, to the astonishment and dismay of those present (who already believed him completely crazy), suddenly he let the bird go to run around.

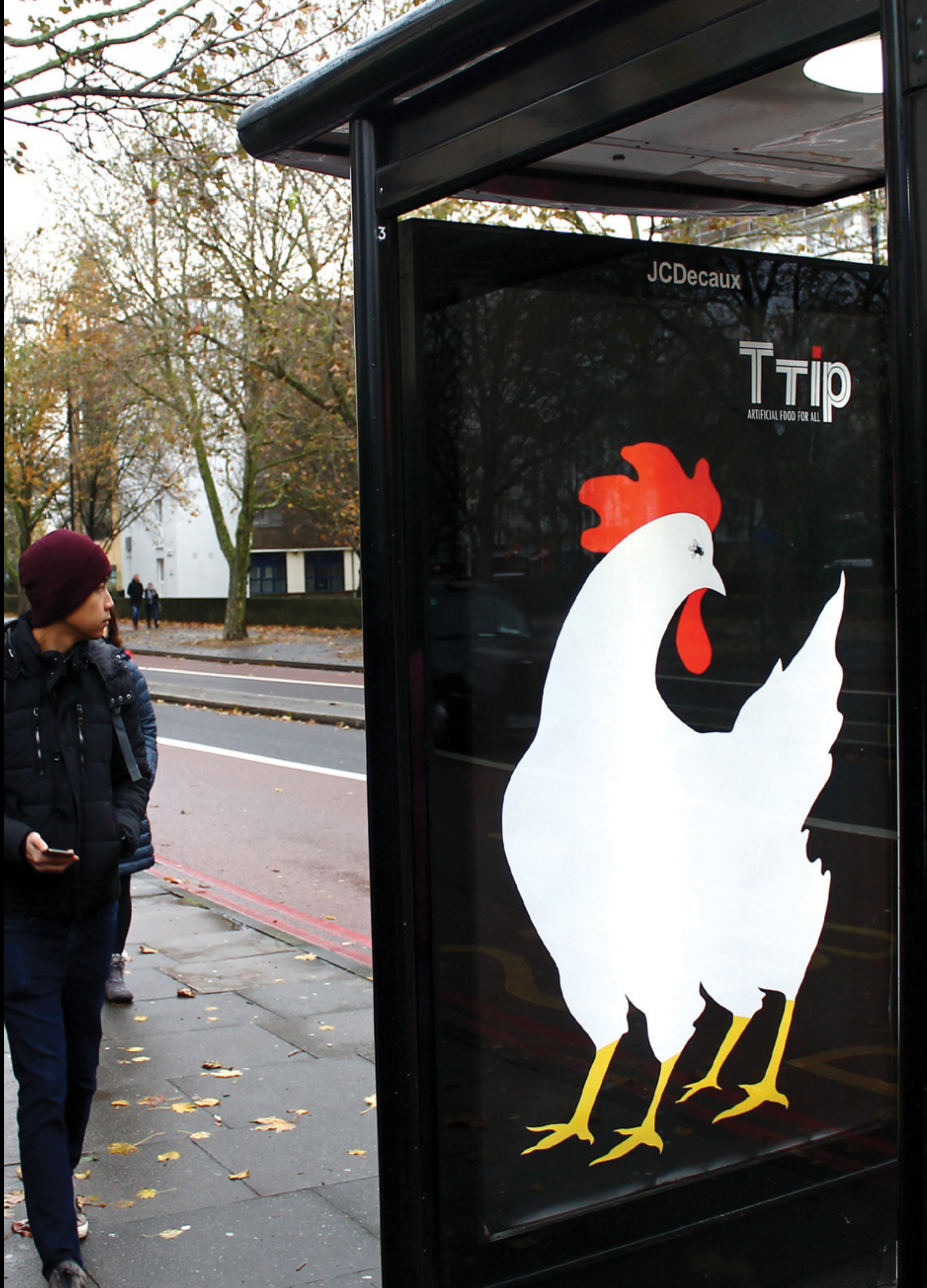
The legs of the chicken imprinted their red footprints all over the blue stripe. At this point the artist turned to the Queen and said: 'my rival is undoubtedly good, but his talent is devoid of poetry. So even a hen is able to draw a better landscape than him, like the *Maple's leaves walking the river in autumn*."

Storyteller from Downtown.

TTIP

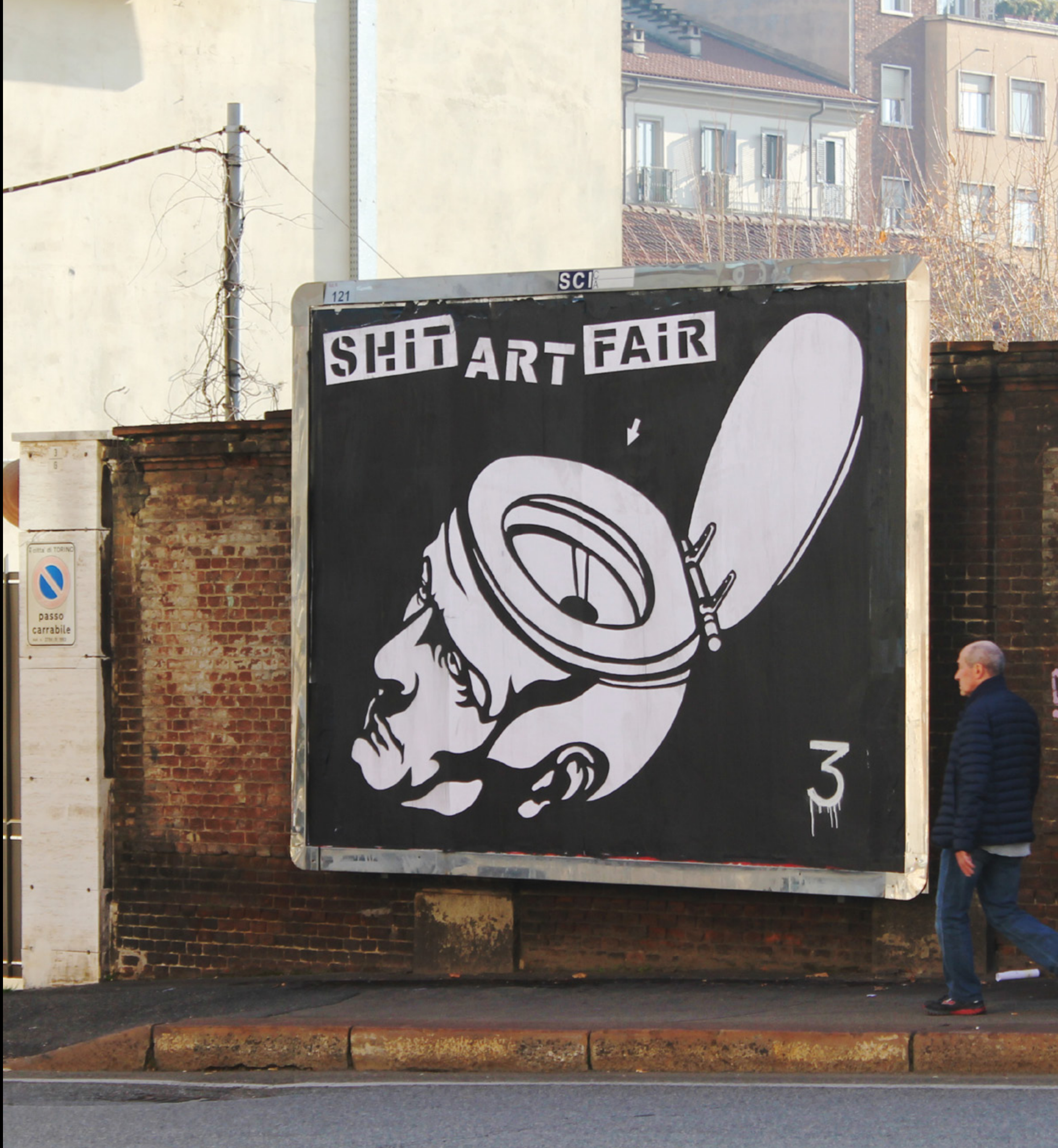
ARTIFICIAL FOOD FOR ALL

Poster designed during protest in Brussels against Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Installed in London and Brussels in November 2016.



"Contemporary art is tormented by its own commodification. (...) It continues to display (without captions and explanations) and collect conceptual art, which then are only worthless fetishes. Duchamp's urinal as well as Cattelan's Pope are rather owned by those who "understand" than those who "own them physically." What is essential is the idea, not the aesthetic or technical quality of the artwork as it might have been in the case of a pictorial table from the fifteenth century."

Guerrilla Spam, creator of Shit Art Fair, a group exhibition of unauthorized art.



SHIT ART FAIR

Tourin, Corso Sommeiller (Italy). Pasted up during the "Week of Contemporary Art."

November 2015.

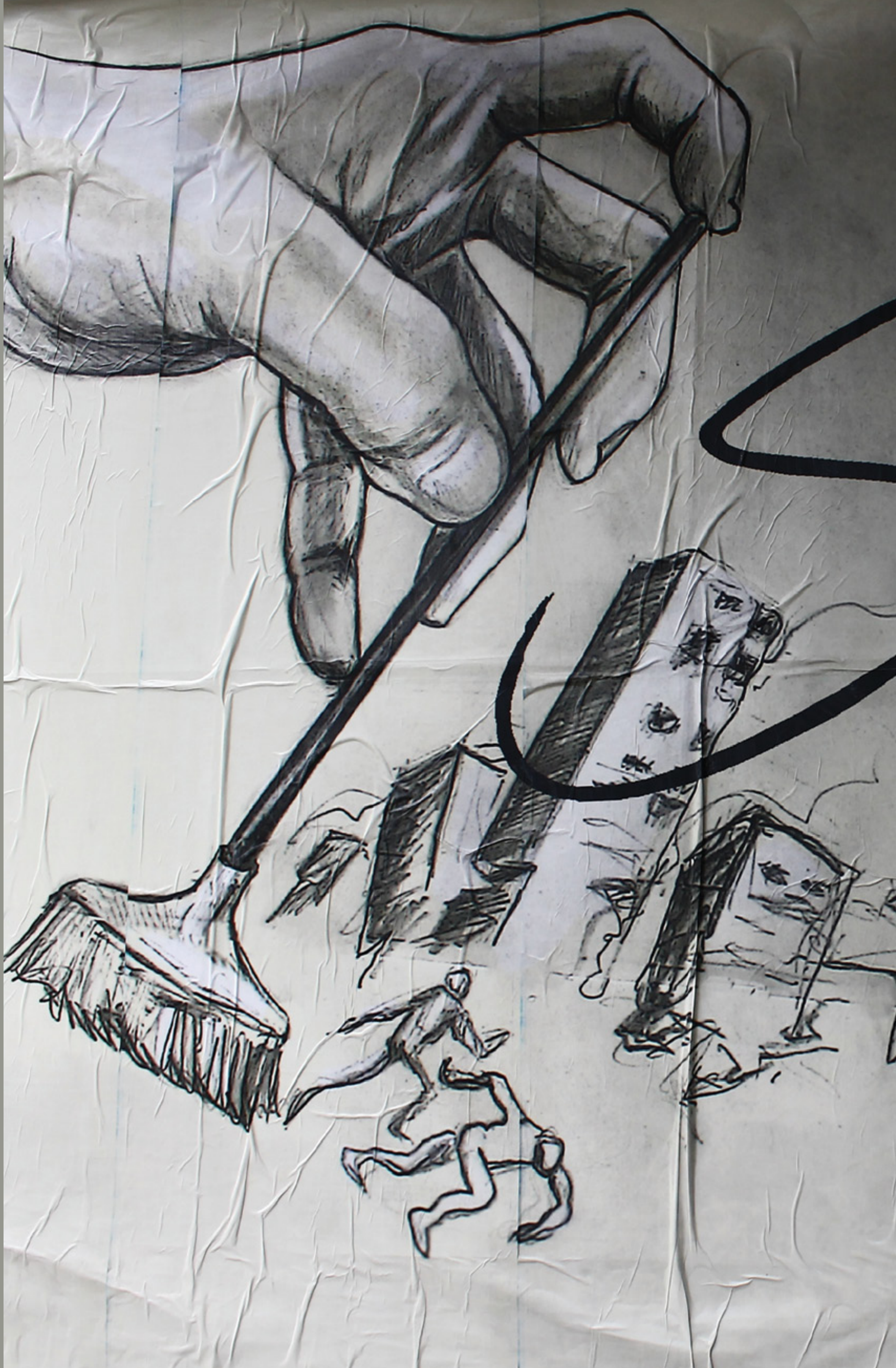
"Historically, Southwark has contained more council housing than most other London boroughs (and still had the highest proportion of 'social rented' households in England, at the time of the 2011 Census). Unfortunately for the people of Southwark, the council (controlled by New Labour since 2010) has done their best to trash this legacy, by pursuing a policy of “estate regeneration”. What this means is that those who live on an estate (mostly working-class council tenants) are forced to leave their homes, the blocks are demolished, and the land sold to developers.

This happened on the Heygate Estate, near to where Hogre's Social Cleansing piece is situated. Politicians’ promises of a 'right to return' were broken, resulting in thousands of residents being residents being moved out, often far away. Now another estate nearby, the Aylesbury, is threatened with the same fate. It’s been proven that it will cost far more to demolish the entire estate and put up new buildings, than it would to renovate the existing buildings (and keep them properly maintained in future). The environmental and the human costs are rarely considered by the decision-makers, who will be long-gone by the planned completion date of 2032, anyway.

They are following an ideology that seeks to destroy 'single tenure estates', and the poor/working class communities that currently inhabit them. They want to attract more high-earners into the area, and change the demographic of the population. They support this new idea (heavily promoted by Britain’s right-wing media) that only the wealthy deserve to live near the city centre, or in London at all. Their preference is for mixed tenure estates: more owner-occupiers, more buy-to-let landlords, some dodgy shared ownership deals, just enough so-called 'affordable housing' to attract funding, and if they can get away with it, no council housing at all. When forced to include some form of 'social housing', the council would rather it was administered by one of the big housing associations (Notting Hill Housing, in the case of the Aylesbury), meaning far fewer secure tenancies and higher rents for those who accept transfers to these flats.

The developers and the construction companies involved in these deals make huge profits (between 20-25% is standard). They benefit from a culture of secrecy, a lack of scrutiny, and a ‘revolving door’ whereby many of those who have worked in Southwark’s Regeneration Department go on to jobs with the developers."

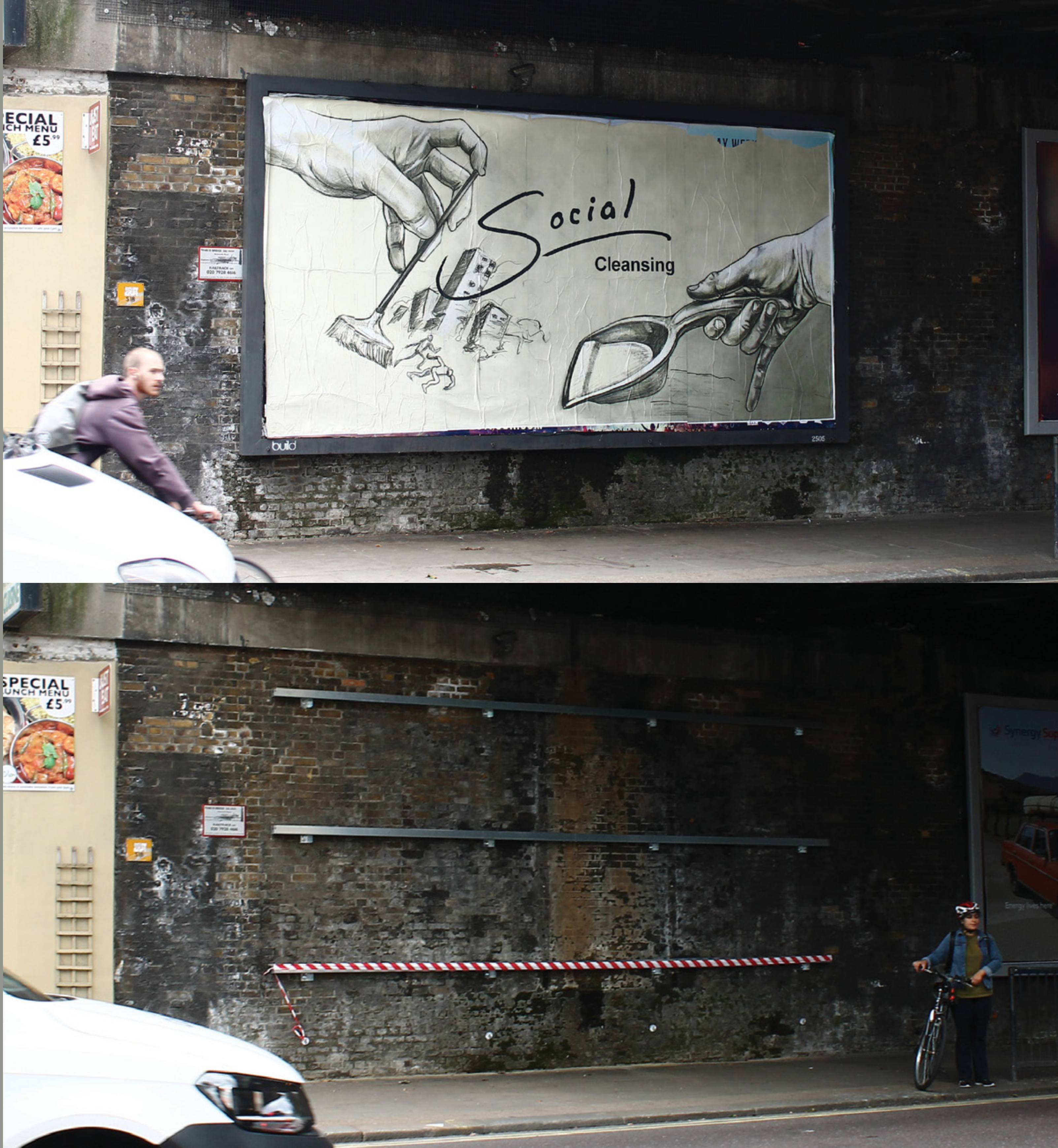
Queer Tango,
South Londoner and bicycle rider



The headline "Social Cleansing" subverts Southwark Council's own logo to describe the impact of the council's policies. Placed on a billboard by Elephant & Castle, close to the ruins of the Heygate Estate, the entire 6m x 3m metal frame was removed by authorities two days after the installation.

More information about the history of social cleansing in Southwark, and the ongoing resistance, can be found at:

35percent.org
southwarknotes.wordpress.com
fightfortheaylesbury.wordpress.com
heygatewashome.org

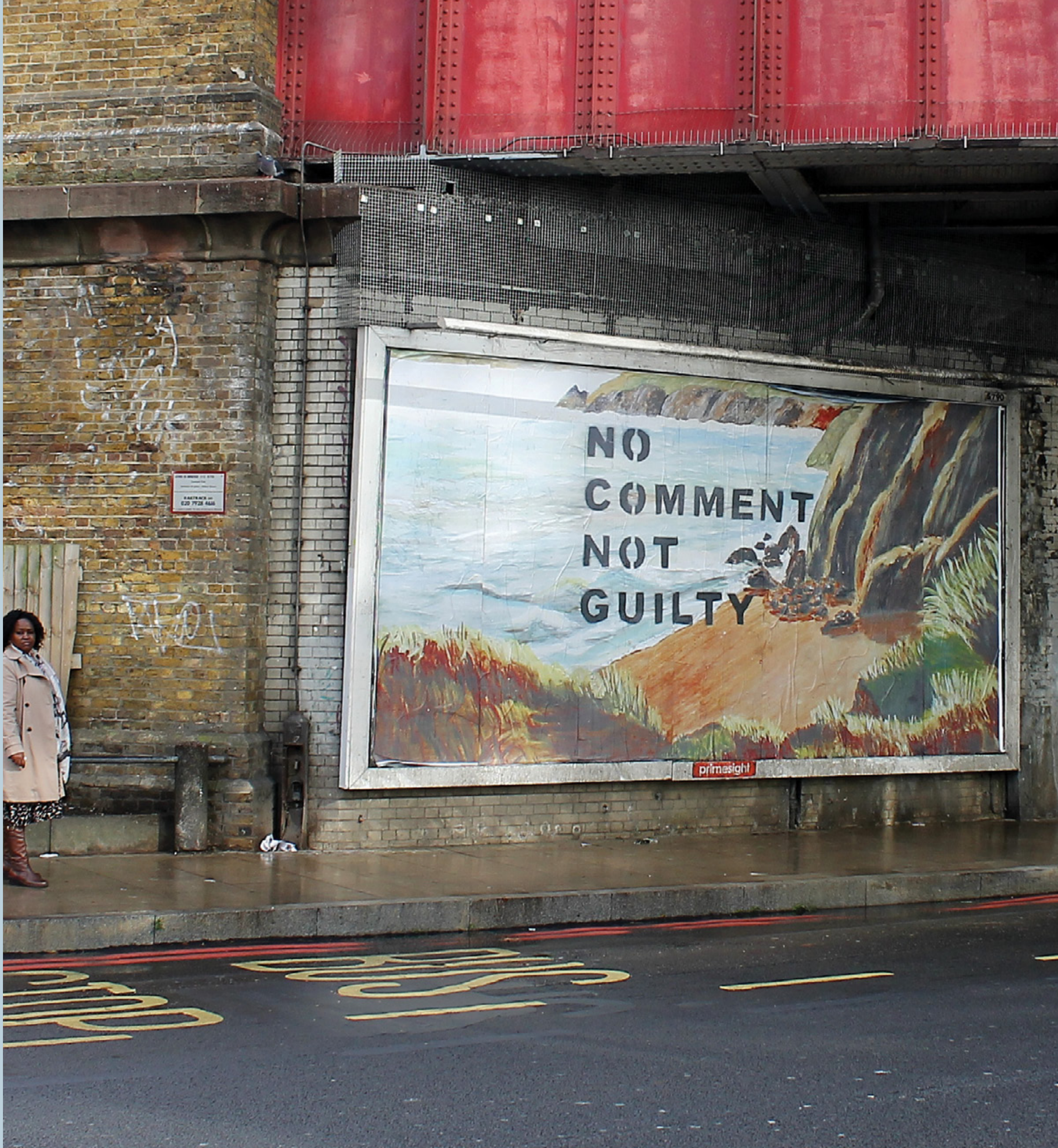


SOCIAL CLEANSING

Elephant & Castle roundabout.
London. July 2016.

"This work is dedicated to the Legal Defence & Monitoring Group (UK), distributors of 'No Comment: the defendant's guide to arrest' and and '83 reasons to plead not guilty'."

Kay Cameron


NO
COMMENT
NOT
GUILTY
primesight

NO COMMENT NOT GUILTY

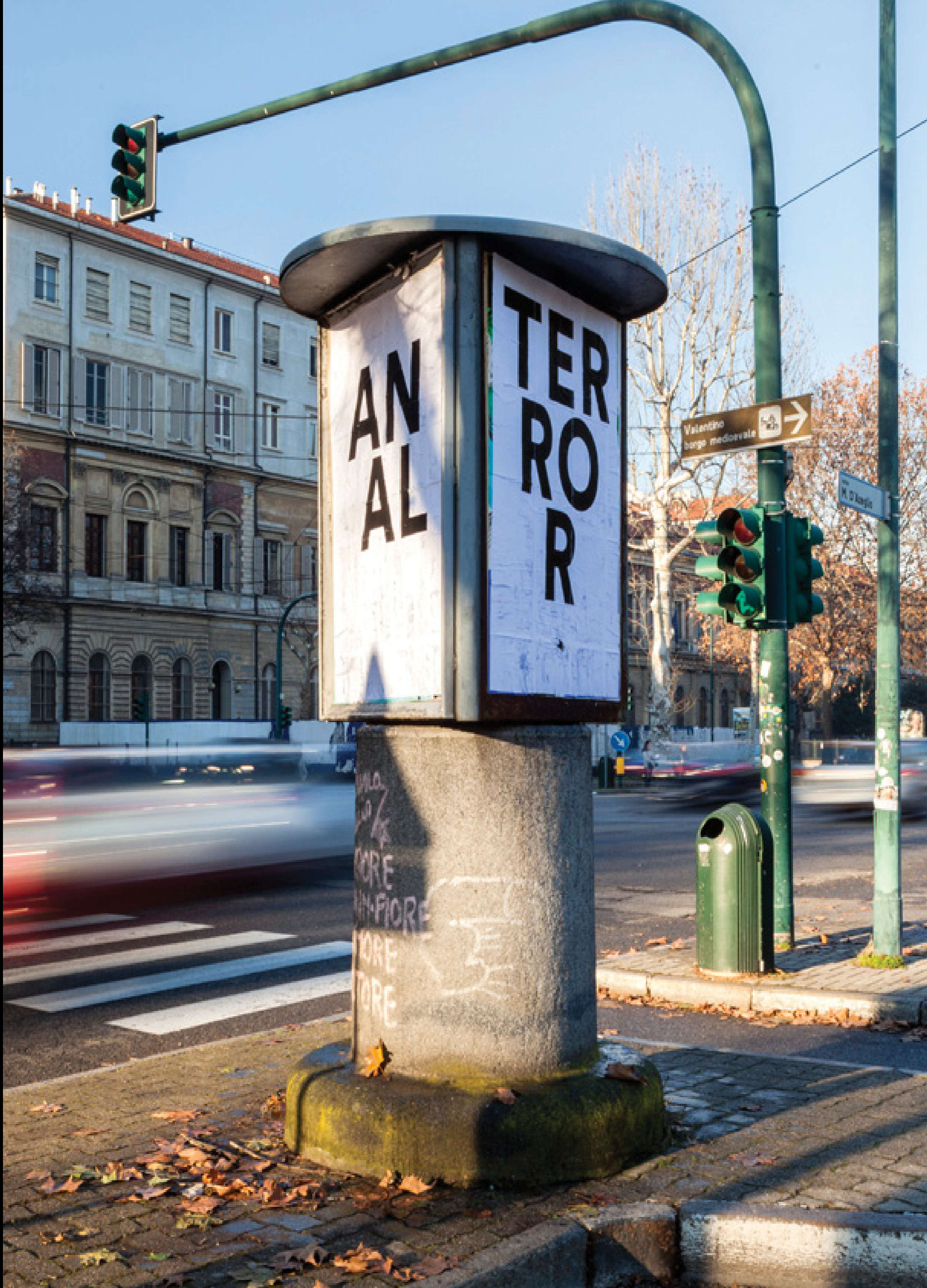
Art by Kay Cameron.
Loampit Vale, London.
November 2016.

"Alone in his forest dwelling, an ogre had spent years building machines to force his visitors to make love to one another: machines with pulleys, chains, clocks, collars, leather leggings, metal breastplates, oscillatory, pendular, or rotating dildos. One day, some adolescents who had lost their way, seven or eight brothers, entered the ogre's house.

No one knows if the traps closed in upon them, or if the boys' curiosity was such that they closed them themselves. In any case, embedded into one another, two by two, and condemned to ejaculate until the end of time, they became the machinery of a factory without electricity and the slaves of a corpse. For they did not know that the ogre, in his attic, was dead."

Guy Hocquenghem (1946-1988)
extract from "The screwball asses" (1973)

ANAL TERROR
Tourin, Corso Massimo D'azeglio (Italy). Pasted up for "Assedio", collective occupation of an ads space. Project run by Guerrilla Spam. Picture by Stefano Guastella.
December 2016.



BEHIND
THE SEEN

THOUGHTS ON STRATEGY

Kay Cameron

"The only subversive gesture is the threat, where it suggests recourse to a force of attack... Opposition, as a posture and not a practice of war, is a function of power whose purpose is to neutralize desire."

Lev Zlodey,
Here at the Centre of the World in Revolt

In south east London, a new city strains to be born from within the old one. Construction cranes slouch into action, the pitter patter of expensive shoes reverberates off paving slabs. One luxury development in Camberwell is marketed under the name Canvas, offering prospective residents the chance to "make your mark" on the area. Here the language of cleansing or whitewashing is actively embraced by the ad-men. They actually want their customers to feel they are entering an entirely new cultural space, predicated on the assumption that what was already here is a blank, or unimportant enough to be simply erased.

Thinking about subvertising in this context, it should be noted specifically that the Canvas ads portray prospective residents as an artistic vanguard, breaking new ground in ways that will be rewarded, first with cultural capital, and then in hard cash. In the book quoted above, Lev Zlodey implores subversives to "maintain a combative daily existence" in order to avoid functioning like one of these vanguards, whether in physical or cultural space. Artists, squatters, queers, anarchists who fail to establish "beachheads in the social war... quickly become a prelimary sales pitch for the reclassification of a neighborhood." Another warning sign can be read up the road in Elephant and Castle, in a hipster/yuppy pop-up jutting out of the redevelopment on the site of the former Heygate Estate. Here a branch of a Greek street food restaurant proudly displays the word Exarcheia across one of its walls, explaining that this offshoot of the franchise is named after the neighbourhood in Athens, "known for its history of resistance and lively anarchist scene." With the commercialists taking up any opportunity to turn an expression of difference and refusal into evidence of the vibrancy of an area, it's easy to feel fatalistic. While subvertising can't hope to foil every attempt to do this, it can play a part in returning fire, by allowing artistic expression to engage in the practices of attack and threat that the prevailing conditions necessitate.

How exactly do we carry out this attack, and how do we keep it up? Clearly, we need to keep our minds open to the many forms that attack can take, and the networks of support that make such a position possible in the first place. As such, we should be alert to the multiple dimensions of action, and to sites and acts that might not look stereotypically insurrectionary or radical. An action like replacing a bus stop advert or putting up a billboard can be an exercise in self-indulgence, but it can also be an experiment in collaborative action, a communication between groups that don't usually talk to each other, something immediately useful for a daily struggle, and a kind of ambient cheerleading for anyone facing the difficult acts and decisions that everyday resistance is made of. Hogre's works in London have sometimes achieved these goals, and sometimes I think they have failed - but even failure shouldn't be seen as a bad thing from the perspective of learning, rehearsal, and self-reflection, which are indispensable elements in the escalation of struggle. Whatever our practice, we need to get good at these things.

We have a lot of critical thinking and learning to do when it comes to spreading ideas that are antithetical to order and control, but above all it's important that we accomplish this learning through action. The model of propaganda (literally "material to be propagated") is one of the so-called master's tools insofar as it is a tactic for spreading a consistent and homogenising code across a diverse territory. If we take this tool on, we will want to adapt it such that this homogenising quality is subverted. We might choose to stubbornly pay attention to the medium and process involved, to the needs of the accomplices we are working with, and the particularities of struggle at play in a particular place and time.

Listening and learning from proximity to struggles that are not our own is indispensable, and this is always going to be easier in a group of friends. Provided you share some kind of commitment to self-criticism, friends can multiply connections, experiences, and perspectives, as well as challenging each other to project outwards rather than turning inwards. This is also crucial from the perspective of self-defence. When the next wave of repression hits us – the new technology, the new law, the new normal – suddenly the capacities, accomplices, support networks, and informative and empathic links that we built today will take on a new importance, as will the extent to which our dreams have resonated beyond our familiar circles and spaces.

OFF WITH THEIR ADS

Vyvian Raoul & Hogre

London, October 2016

What's your story?

Ok, so, in 2006 there was a huge campaign in every neighbourhood in Rome by Berlusconi, fuckin' Silvio Berlusconi, who two years after won the election and became prime minister. And with some friends from the neighbourhood, we took some spray paints and sprayed over his face. Yeah, it was fun, but of course it was also reaction to this constant bombarment of lying, ridiculous lying, and slogans. I remember some, like: "Finally more police in every neighbourhood!" And then we wrote: "That's the problem!" Stuff like that, no?

And during that campaign there was kind of a great reaction from people in the street because there were lots and lots of billboards targeted by people. That was when I was just discovering spray paints, and it was, like, wow, amazing tool. I was also fascinated by proper graffitti so I started to do some with the same friends; it wasn't overtly political artwork, but it's a fight for space anyway, so in a certain way it can be. My first piece was with my friend Federico, and we wrote Ska, which is like the kind of music, you know? And after that he said to me, you have to find your tag. We were very young, like 15 years old. There is in the graffiti scene, and especially in Rome, unfortunately, it's kind of a masculine... it's too masculine an environment. There is this attitude of showing off - of course, graffitti is a lot about showing off. So, it can also be childish and stupid, and I chose this tag because it was the name of the character, like the boss of a video game called Ogre... First time I wrote it with an 'H' at the beginning. It was a spelling mistake, but then i consciously never corrected it...

What game?

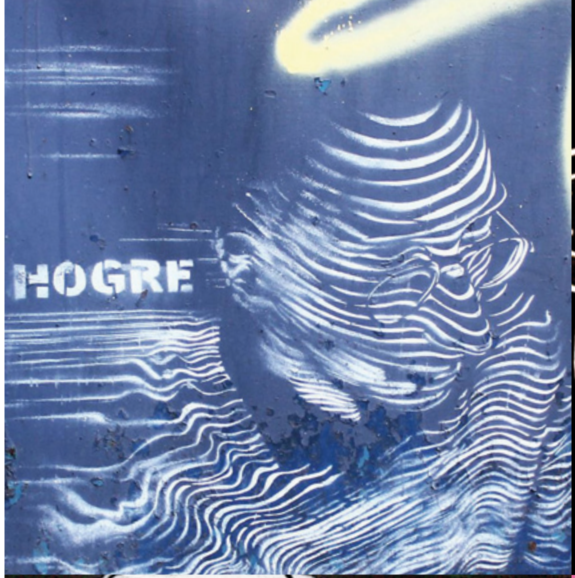
It was Tekken 3... (laughs)

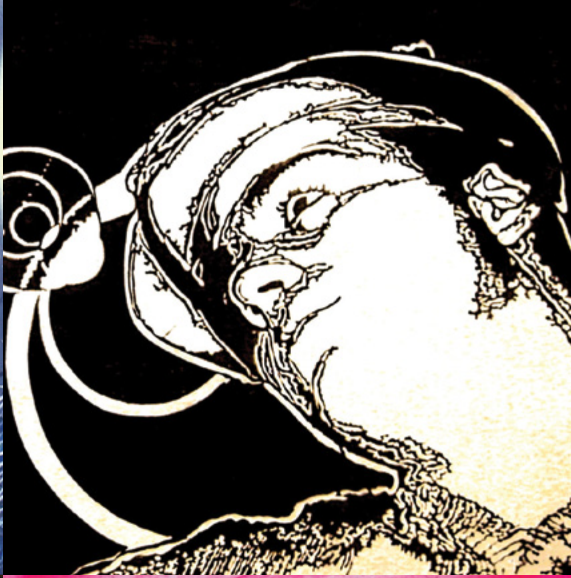
So this is how this name first popped up. It was about competition, no? Later I was slightly annoyed by this stupid reason of just playing with my friend, to get noticed. But I continued to use it, because I was interested in creating artworks that were mixing strength and boldness with sensitivity and grace. My first productions were stencils, most of the time portraits of my friends, handcut and really detailed. And combined with a blocky, bold tag it made a nice contrast that generates some kind of astonishment. In 2008/2009 street art was something very fresh in Rome, Banksy was unknown in Italy still. So there was a really good reaction from people. It was anonymous and I was designing everything, but it was kind of the work of a group because I was portraying my friends. So there was this dialogue with other kids from the neighbourhood, like, "Who is this? This figure?" You can recognise some people. That's how it started.

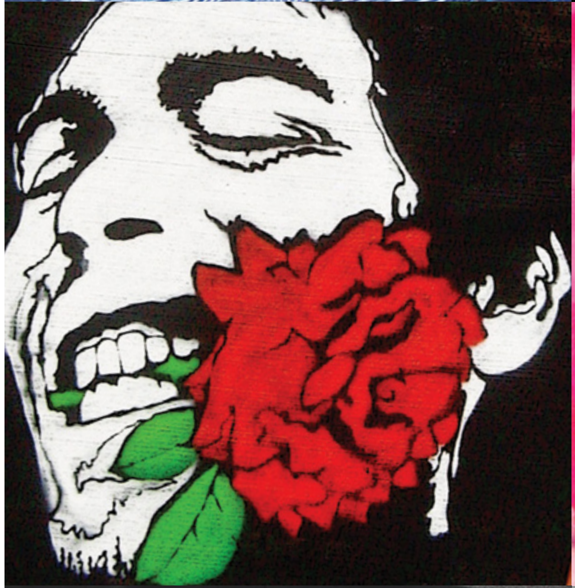
Then I became more politicised, thanks to an activist called Cristiano Armati, who was involved in radical housing. At the time he was also running a cutting-edge gallery, and he was also a talent scout. So he called me and thanks to him I did my first solo show. Later I moved closer and closer to housing struggle, which in Rome is a bit... all the movements for housing are pretty different to London. There are big occupations of 200-300 people...

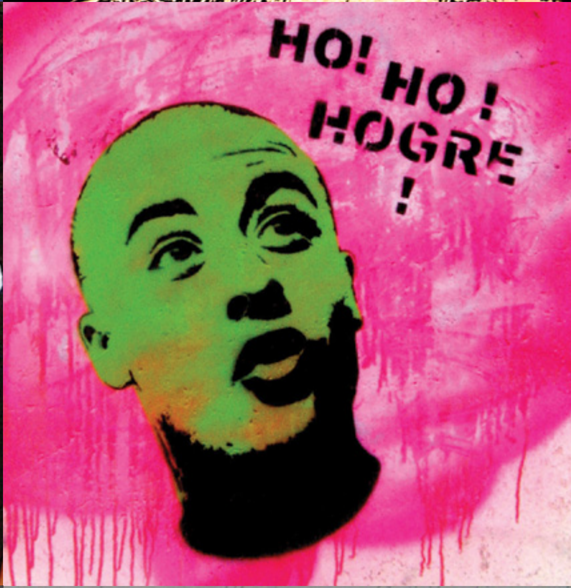
It's more of a squatting culture?

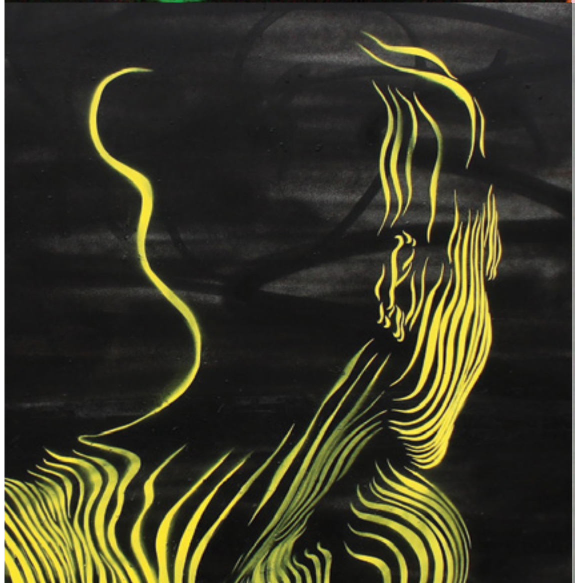
That's the thing, there isn't really a distinction between squatting and occupiers. It's very, very politicised. You can't survive as a squatter in Rome without the support

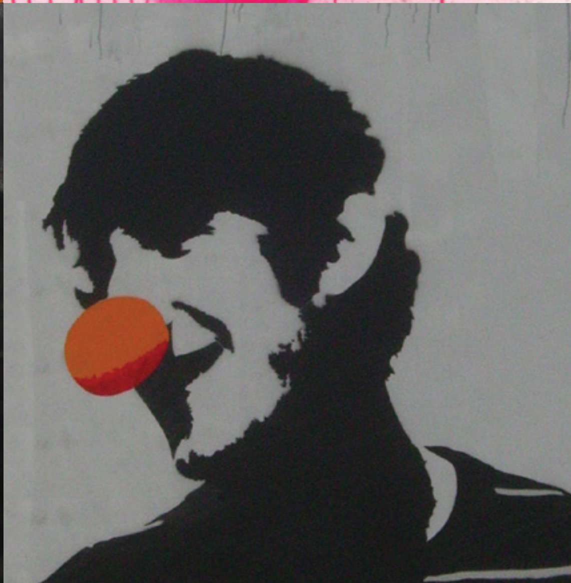












of these political groups, which are called "The Co-ordinators of the struggle for Right to Housing". So a very communist name, no? There were many different groups splitting and evolving from each other: Avanguardia Operaia, Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio claimed independence from the Communist Party, then Autonomia Operaia claimed independence from these groups. Anyway, it started around the 70s with some occupations in San Basilio, Magliana and Tiburtino III, and this was just the same, all the people that were running these different groups, they claim independence from a previous one but then they reproduce the same forms of internal organisation. They still feel they are like the Red Army against the state, which later I had some trouble with, because of this hierarchy that there is: the assembly has the hegemony and ideologies rule practicalities. But, yeah, even so, they are still doing lots of important things. And, of course, they house a lot of immigrants and so they, in a way, help to integrate these people into Roman society.

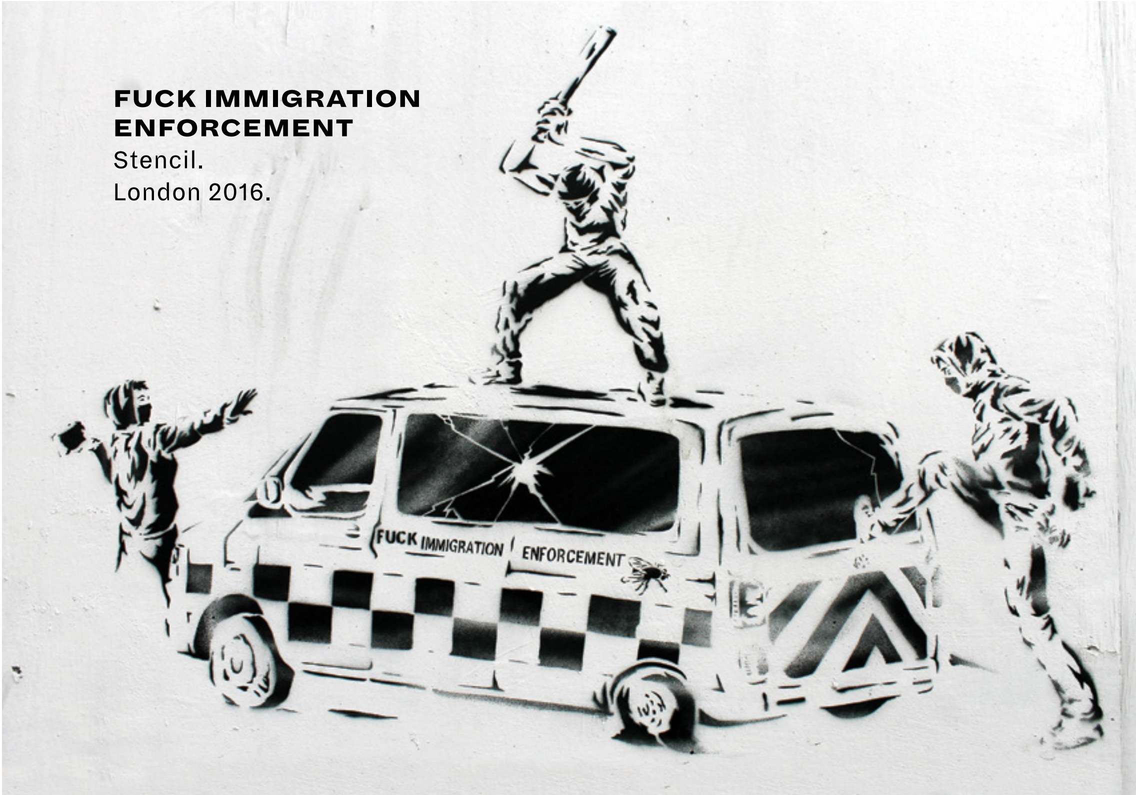
So, basically, I did some exhibitions - lots in social centres and squats, or occupations. Some official, like in Cristiano Armati's gallery, but then street art started to grow as a phenomenon, and I think 2010 was like a key year, because there was this Banksy phenomenon arriving from the UK, like a huge fashion model, then the institutions start to use street art. Legal street art, so by definition it's already not street art - but they started using this medium of painting on surfaces, even big surfaces, to make speculation...

As in, to increase the value of their property?

To increase the value of their property. To start to, I dunno... the media starts to talk about the fact there is a painting instead of a problem behind that thing...

It becomes part of gentrification?

Gentrification, but even worse. Just to give you a really recent example, at the moment there is this huge struggle in the north of Italy called No Tav. People are fighting because they don't want a fast train between Italy and France. It generates lots of health problems for the people who live where the train has to pass, because there is lots of uranium inside the mountain, and so making holes and tunnels in that area is not the smartest thing to do. This train will just provide to a bunch of businessmen and have an insane cost to the public. And so there is this huge struggle that is run by a group called No Tav – you have something similar with, I don't know, the ZAD in France, or the struggle against the runway in Heathrow, no? Anyway, the institutions building it commissioned street artists to go in the tunnel, where the workers are trying to make this tunnel for the train, and paint it. And then, ooh la la, there is street art inside. So it's like, this



FUCK IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT
Stencil.
London 2016.

kind of stuff, y'know? And of course, my reaction and the reaction of other friends was "Fuck this shit!" It's not us, it's not what we're trying to say, and they're just using our medium to run their profits.

So that was part of your politicisation as well?

It was all part, yes. There are lots of examples of how street art was used by institutions. There was another artist, Blu, who was for sure the great Italian street artist, and one of the biggest in the world. He painted in the neighbourhood San Basilio, which was, as I said before, where the first occupations of the radical housing struggles started. And he painted during a street art festival, but without permission. Other people went in there with permission, and they painted flowers, animals – I dunno, aesthetically they have nothing to say, like, nice stuff, but the meaning was lost. So he went in there and nobody – even the festival, the police and the authorities – realised that there was one more. He painted a 30m wall to talk about the history of the neighbourhood and the occupations, and of course it was covered two days after, when they realised. And he's like one of the most important people that you can have in there, so it was ridiculous, no?

I recognised straight away the necessity of putting into discussion how public spaces were used. So it was just trying to be... trying not to forgot what pushed me at the beginning, when me and my friends we were tagging all the Berlusconi billboards in the city – that's what I'm interested in, keeping it real. So that's what I'm doing, it's important not to forget the basis.

And of course, during my short experience with galleries, I met lots of sharks that just thought about how to get money from you.

Did you have any art education? Did you go to art school?

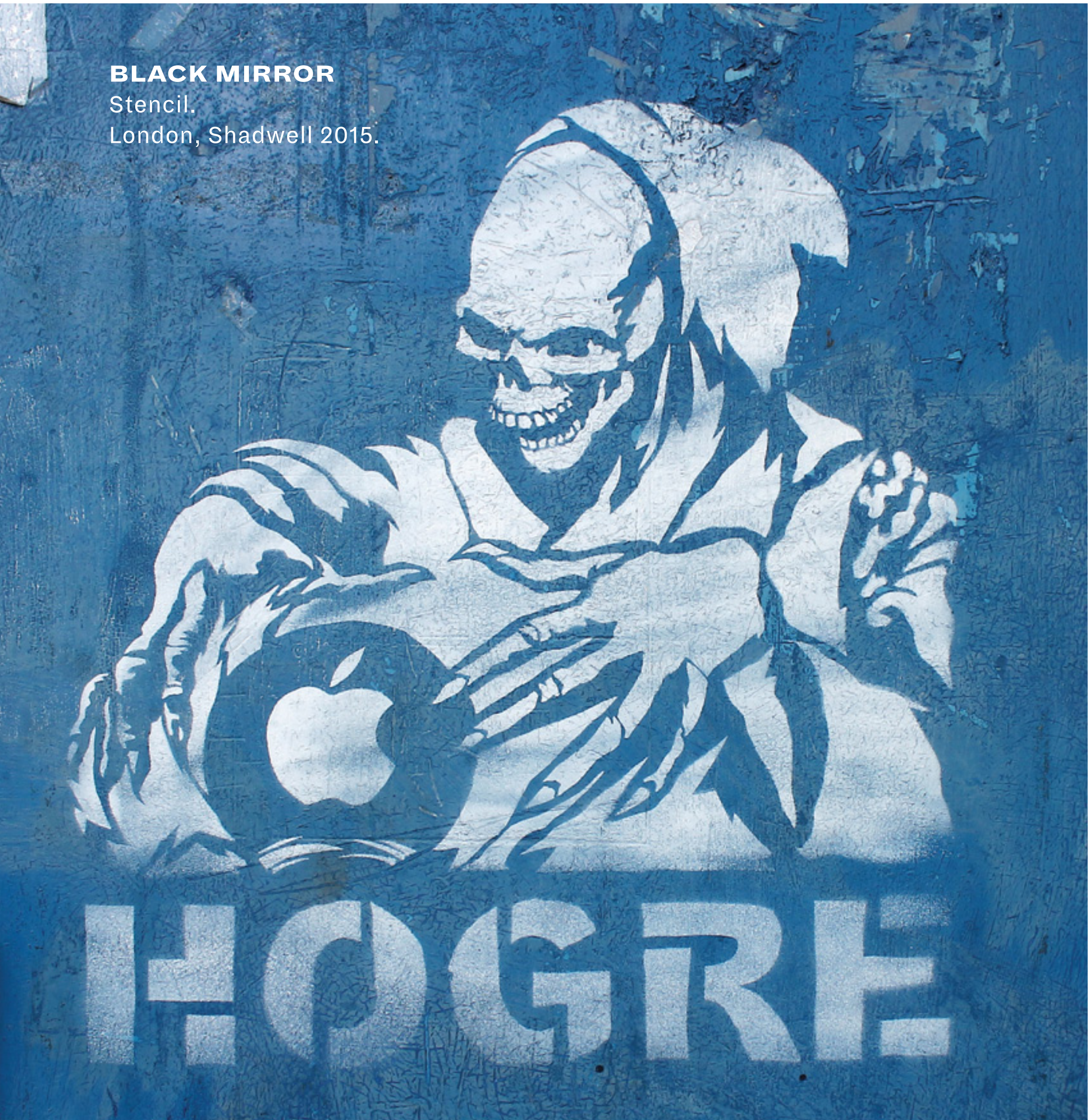
After my high school I had no idea what to do, and then I went to study psychology for a bit, and it was just taking drugs and surviving the exams. So, I was like, hmm, maybe it's not so useful. Then I applied for a scholorship on a graphics course, but it was just about, like, computer stuff. Actually, I'm completely self-taught in drawing, apart from some tips from other graffiti masters (JBrock, Joys, Zibe).

It seems like you've moved from stencil art into more subvertising things, fairly recently - what's been the motivation for that change?

It was because I recognised that the wall, as a medium, was not useful anymore. Now you go to Brick Lane, Shoreditch, Hackney and it doesn't matter if you draw a flower or dead cops, it's essentially the same thing. You're not troubling the private property of anyone, painting a wall. The owner is just happy. You're not putting anything into discussion. So, as there are no more spaces – as Naomi Klein said, everything is branded – the only thing left to do is take space back from the brand. And now as different people recognise together that's the way to go, it seems like something extremely new, but we know that it's not, there have been activists dealing with it since the start of advertising.

It is working now, because the brand industry hasn't left any empty spaces, so it is about reappropriation. It discusses how we shall use public spaces, and it both critiques and suggests an alternative. But if subvertising grows and becomes recognisable as a proper movement, not just something for the underground, we will probably need to find new forms to represent our struggles. Protest always needs to be reinvented, otherwise it’s just a routine.

So, I was starting to reconsider all these things, and as a matter of fact, I had this idea of subvertising already, without knowing how it would work or whatever. But, yeah, already in Rome I could clearly see that a change of medium was necessary. When I moved to London I came across Special Patrol Group straight away, of course, because I already had my eyes open to the subject. Then found their amazing Ad Space Hack Pack and tried to access some cabinets, and it was done!



BLACK MIRROR
Stencil.
London, Shadwell 2015.

What would you like to be the outcome of your work? With Special Patrol Group, they've done the Ad Hack Manifesto, and would like all outdoor advertising to be banned worldwide, so that's quite a big target; when I asked Bill [Posters of Brandalism] the same question, he said he'd like for there to be more democracy in the visual realm. Jordan Seiler of Pubic Ad Campaign thought that what he'd like to see would be curated spaces for public scrawl rather than adverts. What are your ideas?

What I'm doing is associated with politics, and I'm interested in politics, but this is never the starting point. I'm interested in drawing and doing it as an expression of myself. That's what an artist should do, be honest with themselves. But then I also think that in this period we give too much importance to the artist and the art-form in general. I don't know if you recognise the same, but sometimes you see some political artists and you think they have the solution to a question...

I can think of some...

Exactly. It’s a bit too much. It’s not true, no? So what I can do is, suggest solutions to other people – you never know. What I would really like to do is to, aesthetically, stylistically, suggest to the new generation of graffiti and street artists that they can confront with something bigger than the crew of the neighbourhood close to them. And there are different, interesting ways of doing it. Reflecting on what copyright is today is a good starting point. You are bombarded by images, that are violently in front of your eyes, you can't do anything to avoid seeing them, and then they are also protected by all these fucking "rights". So I think our only freedom is to take revenge against power.

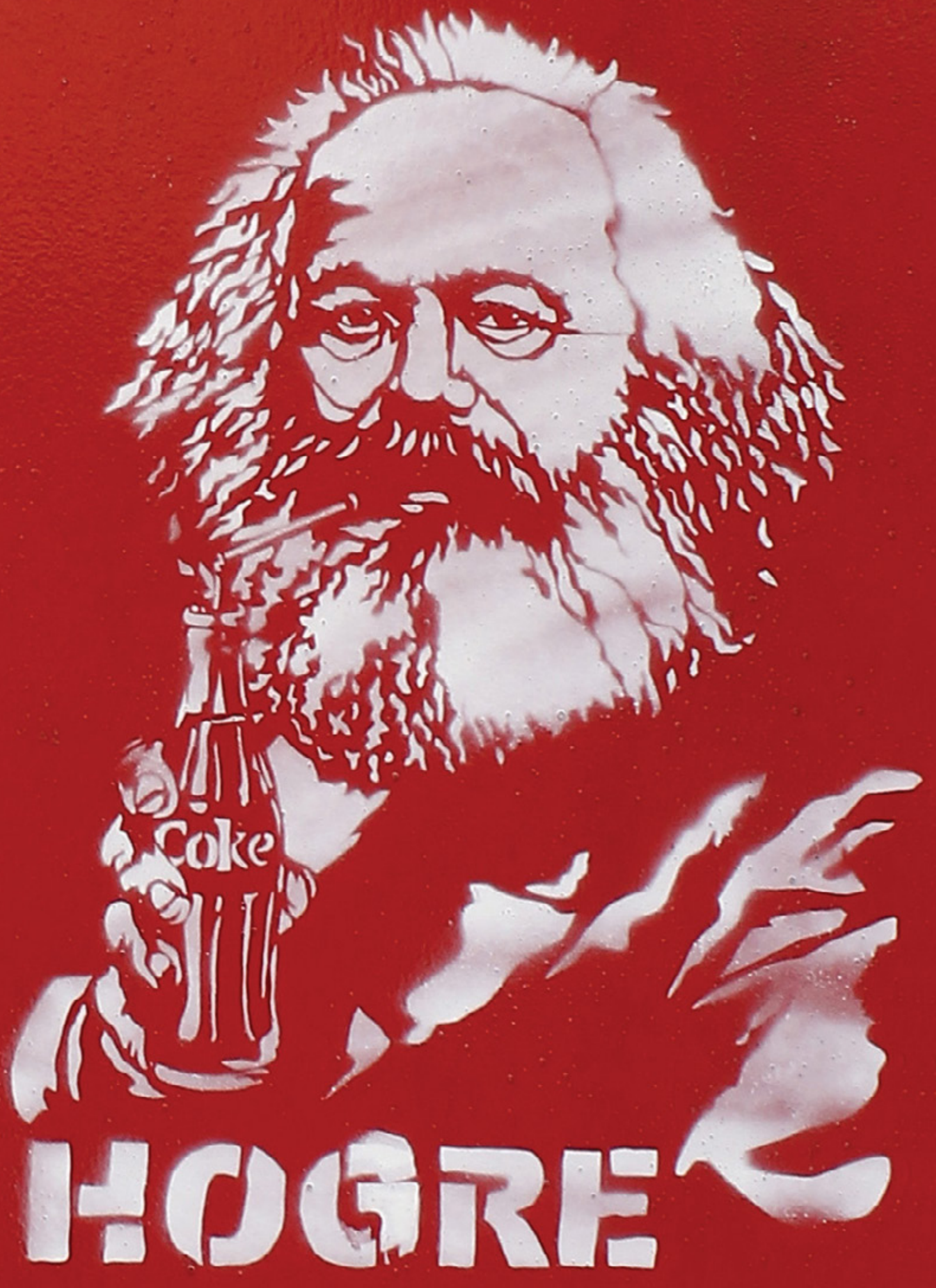
That touches on something else I wanted to ask, which was whether you saw your work more as art or activism, or where it sits on the intersections of both?

That's a question that's apt for this moment, because I never defined myself before as an artist, and I'm trying to deal with it. Because when I say "people give too much responsibility to artists" then I'm doing the same. And I'm super in love with the works of grand masters of the past, so when you're starting to use this word, I'm feeling... I'm getting into confrontation with people who are as far as the stars, you know? So it might just be for fear that I'd describe myself in a different way. But to overcome this fear is even more unsettling, because it is determined by external circumstances: suddenly, I have the privilege of being an artist. My claims for anarchism are a consequence of this reasoning. My father told me many times that I'm good at being annoying, so that's what I'm doing.

I agree with that in a Brechtian sense: that everyone's an artist but only some people have the position of artist, that those labels are a consequence of the division of labour. I do some writing, a bit of journalism, and when I do that I do it under a pseudonym, and part of that is to try and poke fun a little bit at the position of writer. And I wondered whether, because you also have a pseudonym... well, what are your views on anonymity?

Well, this is part of my culture. Growing up in an environment of graffiti writers, it's kind of status quo. And then it's good because the important thing is never about my private life, so you put a distance between what you produce and yourself, so in this way people who are looking at it don't have to think, "Oh, this is that guy, blah, blah, blah", but they can just view the work itself, and it makes it more personal to them in a certain way. It's good

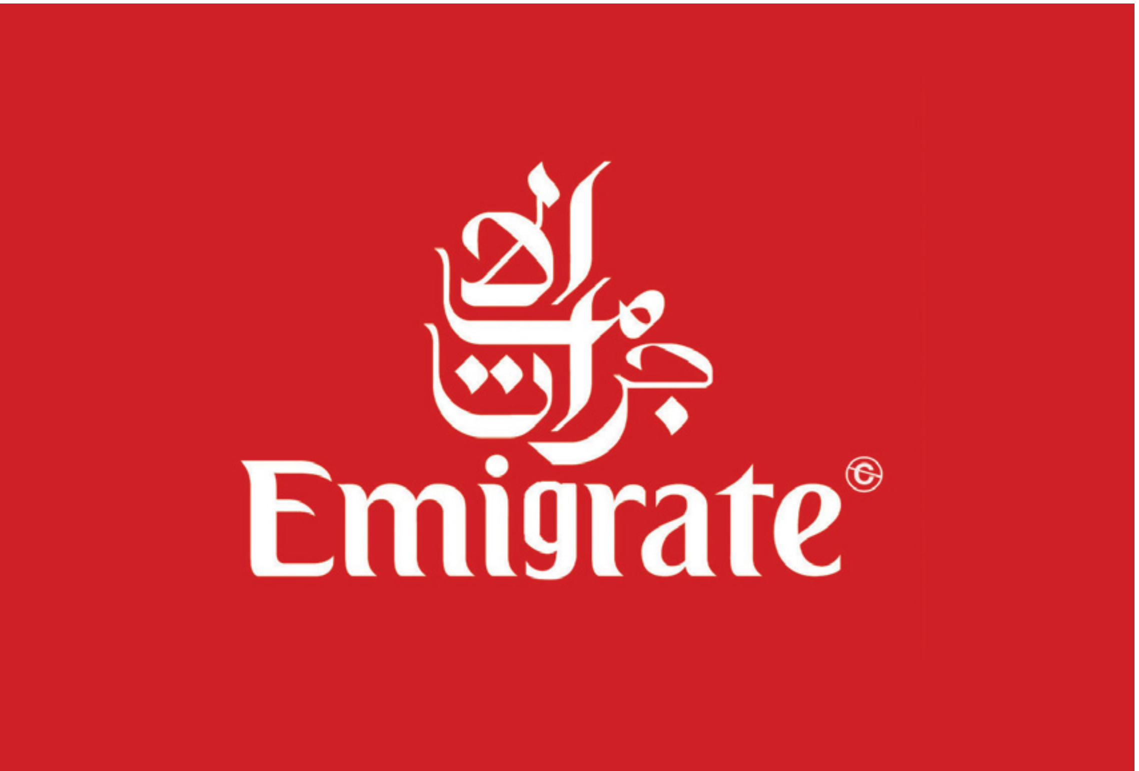
MARX DRINKING A COKE
Stencil.
Warsaw, Poland 2013.



for inspiring other people, I think – at least that's what happened to me when I was looking at other graffiti artists' works. I also found it really annoying when in school you're studying a big artist and instead of just considering their work, what they brought or what they painted, you're just describing their life. If you're a super art nerd, it can be interesting, but sometimes it's just gossip. Then it's a protection also, no? That's also a part.

It's sort of a protection in two ways - like, both legally and for your own sanity as well. To keep that distance between you and the work.

Yes, exactly, exactly. If you express yourself with an article or whatever you are playing with your ego, so you have to be careful not to... it's a danger, actually, to let it flow too much.



You mentioned protection then: what you do is kind of, at best, in a legal grey area. It's probably just illegal. What are your thoughts about legality? I asked Jordan about what he does - and what he does is just illegal. In the States the charge would be possession of graffiti materials. But he uses his own name, because he wants to own it - he wants to claim his work in that way. What are your thoughts about that aspect of claiming your work?

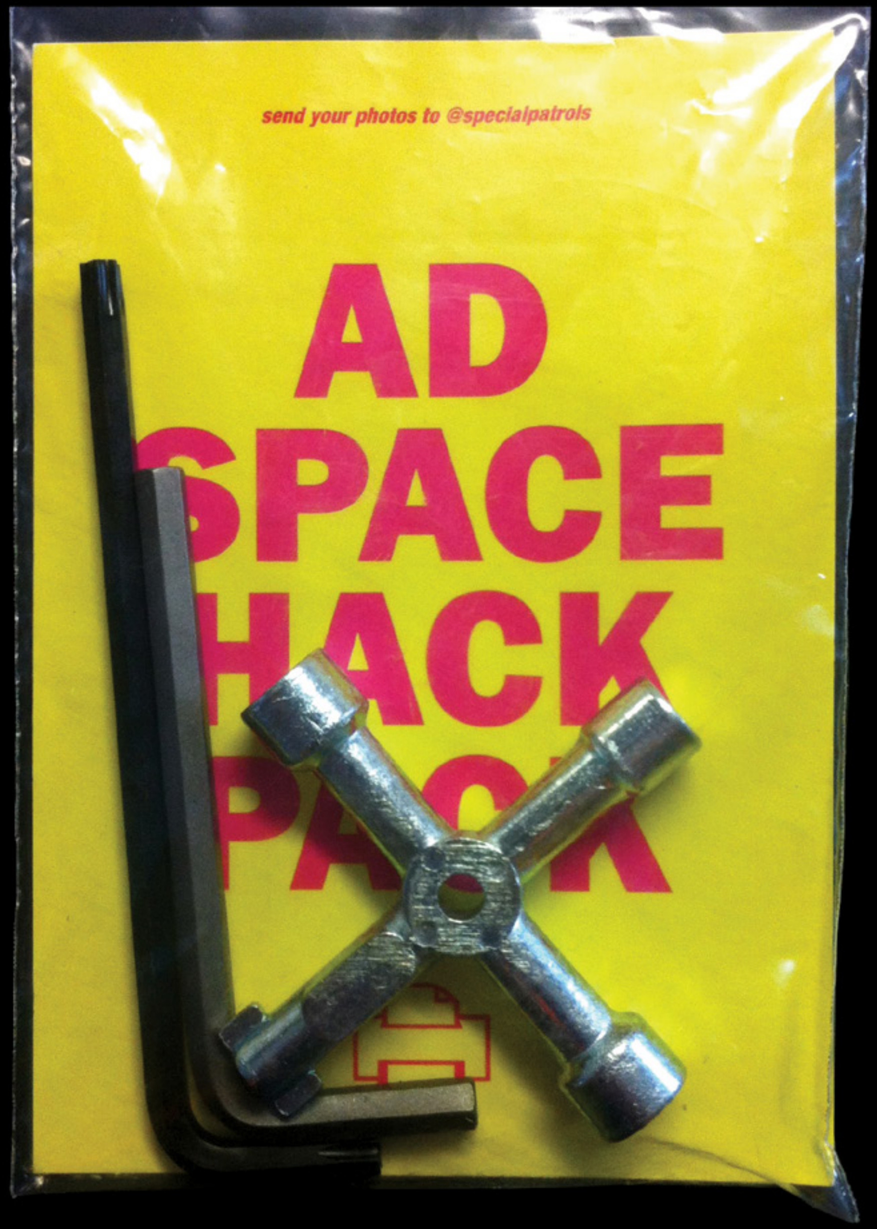
Ok, well, another person that really influenced me was one of the Luther Blissett collective, that I had the luck to meet. Before Wu-Ming and before Q they were quite a large collective. And I was very influenced by it. Luther Blissett as an idea is extremely powerful, no? What better can you imagine? You have the chance to claim an action... because it is important to claim an action. If you're anonymous and you don't claim anything it can be lost or your point of view can be misunderstood too much. So, before, we talked about how it's good to inspire people, even in ways you didn't plan for, it's part of the game, but then if your work is completely misunderstood this can be frustrating. So claiming the action is important to avoid that.

Luther Blissett could do that without any risk. It's a great example. My story is a bit different, it just happened in a different way. I've had lots of friends that have supported me at different times. Now, for example, with my [squat] crew, they don't like to draw, but they still help me. For sure, the most important thing is that I'm perfectly conscious that most of the time, maybe every time, my works are a consequence of what's around me. So even if the choice of style is very particular for people who are engaged with this kind of medium, this is personal, but then the rest is a consequence of an environment, no?

So do you see Hogre as almost a collective identity?

It is not a collective, but it's influenced and supported by many people that I've met during my time. It is a structure with no fixed roles, like a floating agency providing free services of subvertising, guerrilla marketing against the state and other forms of creative vandalism in public spaces.

It's important in a political struggle to not provide an identity, not just for legal reasons, but because every new identity, every new style, every rebel attitude is easy to reproduce for the market, and then easy to be sold. That’s also why I use different styles, why I experiment with different mediums, to avoid generating images that are all the same. Subvertising works better if you can’t tell straight away if it is subvertising or not. It has to be illegal, of course, but it also has to be sneaky.



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